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from

THAILAND 1964-1965

10 AUGUST 1966

HQ PACAF

Directorate, Tactical Evaluation

Prepared by: MSgt Robert T. Helmka

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S.E. Asia Team

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CHAPTER I

ORGANIZATION

A. THE BUILDUP

1. Background

In November ¹⁹⁶¹1965, there were only two small USAF detachments in Thailand. Both were at Don Muang Airport near Bangkok. A few more, also small units, moved into the country between April and July 1962, and were stationed at Don Muang, Ubon, Korat, and Takhlí. Still other units were assigned during 1963. ^{1/}

In March 1964, Detachment 1, 1st Air Commando Wing, moved into Udorn to conduct a training program in support of Royal Laotian Air Force T-28 operations (See Chapter II, "T-28 Pilot Training at Udorn"). On 18 May, following a Communist attack against the Neutralists on the Plaine des Jarres, the first Yankee Team reconnaissance missions were flown over Laos (See Chapter II, "Reconnaissance"). Also resulting from the PDJ attack was an immediate step-up in the T-28 training program. These events led to the first significant increase in the number and types of units in Thailand. Events of August 1964 contributed to a buildup throughout Southeast Asia, including Thailand. On the 2nd and 4th of that month, North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked the U.S. Navy destroyers Maddux and Turner. In retaliation, naval aircraft struck at four North Vietnam (DRV) installations on the 5th. Uncertainty as to what reactions the retaliatory strikes would provoke led to an upsurge in the U.S. buildup, and new contingency forces were moved into SEA. ^{2/}

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While there was a continuing increase in strength after August 1964, the next sizable buildup occurred during the second half of 1965. The units in Thailand on permanent assignment from late 1961 through 1965 are listed in Table 1. Numerous other units were in Thailand on temporary duty (TDY) for varying periods of time during that period. Those units do not appear in Table 1 but are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs. Table 2 reflects the personnel increase that occurred since mid-1964.

TABLE 1

PCS UNITS IN THAILAND

Don Muang Airport

Det 1, 5th Tactical Control Group	15 Nov 1961 - 1 Oct 1963
Det 4, 405th Fighter Wing	15 Nov 1961 -
6010 Tactical Group, Hq	10 Jul 1962 - 8 Jul 1963
Det 1, 8th Aerial Port Sq	8 Dec 1962 - 10 Apr 1965
Det 5, 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Sq	1 Apr 1965 -
Hq 35th Tactical Group	8 Jul 1963 - 8 Jul 1965
35th Air Base Squadron	8 Jul 1963 -
6315th Aerial Port Squadron	10 Apr 1965 - 8 Aug 1965
Det 1, 6315th Aerial Port Squadron	10 Apr 1965 - 8 Aug 1965
6236th Combat Support Group	8 Jul 1965 -
6th Aerial Port Squadron	8 Aug 1965 -
Det 12, 6003rd Support Squadron	24 Sep 1965 -
Det 6, 5th Communications Squadron	8 Oct 1965 -

Ubon Airfield

Det 4, 5th Tactical Control Group	28 Apr 1962 - 8 Apr 1964
6012th Air Base Squadron	10 Jul 1962 - 8 Jul 1963
332nd Air Base Squadron	8 Jul 1963 - 8 Jul 1965
Det 2, 619th Tactical Control Sq	8 Apr 1964 - 22 Dec 1965
Det 5, 6315th Aerial Port Squadron	10 Apr 1965 - 8 Apr 1965
6233rd Combat Support Group	8 Jul 1965 -
Det 5, 6th Aerial Port Squadron	8 Aug 1965 -
Det 13, 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Sq	8 Nov 1965

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PRINCIPAL AIR BASES
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8th Tactical Fighter Wing	Dec 1965 -
8th Combat Support Group	8 Dec 1965 -
433rd Tactical Fighter Sq (asgd 8TFW)	11 Dec 1965 -
497th Tactical Fighter Sq (asgd 8TFW)	18 Dec 1965 -
Det 3, 620th Tactical Control Sq	22 Dec 1965 -

Korat Air Base

Det 1, 6010th Tactical Group	10 Jul 1962 -	8 Jul 1963
Det 1, 35th Tactical Group	8 Jul 1963 -	25 Mar 1965
6234th Air Base Squadron	25 Mar 1965 -	8 May 1965
6234th Tactical Fighter Wg, Provisional	5 Apr 1965 -	8 Jul 1965
Det 3, 6315th Aerial Port Squadron	10 Apr 1965 -	8 Aug 1965
6234th Combat Support Group	8 May 1965 -	
6234th Tactical Fighter Wing	8 Jul 1965 -	
Det 3, 6th Aerial Port Squadron	8 Aug 1965 -	
Det 12, 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Sq	8 Nov 1965 -	
469th Tactical Fighter Sq (asgd 6234TFW)	9 Nov 1965 -	
421st Tactical Fighter Sq (asgd 6234TFW)	20 Nov 1965 -	

Takhli Air Base

6011th Air Base Squadron	10 Jul 1962 -	8 Jul 1963
331st Air Base Squadron	8 Jul 1963 -	8 May 1965
Det 3, 6003rd Support Squadron	1 Oct 1963 -	
6235th Tactical Fighter Wg, Provisional	8 Apr 1965 -	8 Jul 1965
Det 2, 6315th Aerial Port Squadron	10 Apr 1965 -	8 Aug 1965
6235th Combat Support Group	8 May 1965 -	8 Nov 1965
Det 2, 6th Aerial Port Squadron	8 Aug 1965 -	
355th Tactical Fighter Wing	1 Nov 1965 -	
355th Combat Support Group	8 Nov 1965 -	
Det 14, 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Sq	8 Nov 1965 -	
354th Tactical Fighter Sq (asgd 355TFW)	27 Nov 1965 -	
333rd Tactical Fighter Sq (asgd 355TFW)	4 Dec 1965 -	
41st Tactical Recon Sq, Photo-jet	20 Oct 1965 -	
Det 9, 620th Tactical Control Sq	22 Dec 1965 -	

Udorn Airfield

Det 6, 1st Air Commando Wing (T-28)	May 1964 -	
Det 2, 35th Tactical Group	11 Jun 1964 -	18 Oct 1964
Det 8, 8th Aerial Port Squadron	18 Oct 1964 -	10 Apr 1965
333rd Air Base Squadron	18 Oct 1964 -	8 Jul 1965
Det 4, 619th Tactical Control Sq	18 Oct 1964 -	22 Dec 1965
Det 1, 6315th Aerial Port Sq	10 Apr 1965 -	8 Aug 1965
15th Recon Task Force (RF-101)	1 Apr 1965 -	
6232nd Combat Support Group	8 Jul 1965 -	
Det 1, 6th Aerial Port Squadron	8 Aug 1965 -	
Det 11, 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Sq	8 Nov 1965 -	

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Det 1, 13th Recon Technical Sq	8 Nov 1965 -
Det 3, Hq 2d Air Division	15 Dec 1965 -
Det 2, 620th Tactical Control Sq	22 Dec 1965 -

Nakhon Phanom

Rescue 2	19 Jun 1964 -
1st Mobile Communications Gp	Sep 1964 -
Det 3, 507th Communications and Control Gp	Sep 1964 -
6235th Air Base Squadron	25 Mar 1965 -
Det 4, 6315th Aerial Port Sq	10 Apr 1965 - 8 Aug 1965
Det 4, 6th Aerial Port Sq	8 Aug 1965 -
Det 5, 619th Tactical Control Sq	10 Aug 1965 - 22 Dec 1965
Det 5, 620th Tactical Control Sq	22 Dec 1965 -

TABLE 2

AIR FORCE PERSONNEL STRENGTH - THAILAND

	PCS		TDY		TOTAL	
	Officers	Airmen	Officers	Airmen	Officers	Airmen
1 Jul 1964	53	522	283*			
31 Dec 1964	66	743	210	1700	276	2443
31 Jul 1965	170	2078	429	3454	599	5542
31 Dec 1965	764	5643	240	1738	1004	7381

* Combined total of officers and airmen. Breakout not available.

2. The 1964 Buildup

As can be seen in Table 1, nearly all units arriving in Thailand during the second half of 1964 went to Udorn Airfield and Nakhon Phanom. Their arrival marked the beginning of greatly expanded U.S. operations at Udorn. Previously, the 1st Air Commando Wing, which conducted the T-28 Training Program for the RLAF, was the only USAF unit there. Nakhon Phanom housed no USAF units before June 1964. Rescue 2, an element of the Pacific Air Rescue Center, was a small unit with 36 personnel and two

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HH-43B helicopters. Not only was it the first Air Force unit at Nakhon Phanom but the first USAF air/sea rescue activity in Thailand. ^{3/}

Along with the assignment of new units, the contingency buildup included the deployment of the first tactical aircraft to Thailand bases. The first of these deployed in June 1964, including four F-102 Delta Dagger aircraft and a like number of KB-50 air refueling tankers, all at Don Muang, and six F-100 supersabres at Takhli. The F-102's were brought in to be placed on alert, ready to be launched, if needed, for air defense of Thailand. The F-100's were there to afford the U.S. the ability to launch retaliatory strikes, should they become necessary. The KB-50's, which were at Don Muang but also periodically positioned at Korat, would provide refueling for the F-100's. ^{4/}

Immediately following the August attacks against U.S. Naval destroyers, and the Navy's reprisal strikes, 12 more F-100's went to Takhli, raising the total to 18. At the same time, 18 F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bombers were positioned at Korat. In November, six more HH-43B helicopters were sent to Thailand to supplement the two at Nakhon Phanom. ^{5/}

3. The 1965 Buildup

Although the big increase started in July 1963, some new units and additional aircraft appeared in Thailand during the early months of 1965. The new units organized in that period were support organizations, while the aircraft were deployed with temporary duty units (TDY). Starting in July, the TDY units were replaced by units sent to Thailand on permanent change of station (PCS) assignments.

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In February, the F-100's at Takhli were replaced by a squadron of 18 F-105's, and the F-105 strength at Korat doubled as additional aircraft arrived to equip the 6234th Tactical Fighter Wing (Provisional) which was to be organized on 10 April. The first CONUS based TDY unit to arrive at Takhli was the 563d TFS, which arrived on 12 April. It was relieved by the 562nd TFS in August, which rotated to the U.S. in December. On 1 March, the Strategic Air Command sent four KC-135 air refueling tankers to Thailand to replace the older KB-50's. The jet tankers initially went to Don Muang but would be alternately positioned at the base and Takhli. Another provisional tactical fighter wing, the 6235th, was ordered to be organized on 10 April at Takhli, but it was never activated. However, a second squadron of F-105's was added at that base and assigned to the Senior Tactical Air Commander, Colonel Edmund B. Edwards. The same month saw the 15th Reconnaissance Task Force with six RF-101's deployed from Okinawa to Udorn (See Chapter II, "Reconnaissance"). The latter doubled its RF-101 force the following month. April also ushered the first 18 F-4C fighter aircraft into Thailand when a squadron was sent to Ubon. Six RB-66 reconnaissance planes arrived at Takhli in May (See Chapter II, "Reconnaissance").

The accelerated buildup, starting in July, was the aftermath of a visit to Saigon in that month by U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. After viewing the war situation and returning to Washington, he announced plans for a large increase in U.S. forces in Southeast Asia. The buildup would proceed in two phases: Phase I, which was to last into the early months of 1966, was described as the period when the U.S. expected to "stop losing and to stabilize the situation." Phase II was to mark the period when America would "start winning." ^{6/}

The first permanent tactical unit assignments in Thailand followed on the heels of the announced buildup. This is reflected not only in

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Table 1, but Table 2, which shows that the number of TDY personnel in the country reached a peak in July and started decreasing in August as PCS personnel increased.

At Korat the 6234th Tactical Fighter Wing, Provisional, which had been formed in April as an interim organization, was replaced in July by a permanent wing--the 6234th Tactical Fighter Wing. An F-4C squadron--the 68th TFS--arrived at Korat in TDY status on 27 August. In the same month, one of the two F-105 squadrons was moved out of that base. Offsetting that loss, however, was the gain of an F-105 unit at Takhli, making three F-105 squadrons at the latter base. The Takhli units, all TDY, were the 36th, 354th, and 562d TFS. Another squadron of F-4C's was sent TDY to Ubon to join the unit which had been there since April. The units at Ubon were the 47th and 431st Tactical Fighter Squadrons. In summary, the units in Thailand during August include a squadron of F-4C's at Korat and two at Ubon; one squadron of F-105's at Korat and three at Takhli; a Reconnaissance Task Force with 12 F-101's at Udorn; the RB-66 unit with seven aircraft at Takhli and the Fighter Interceptor Squadron with four F-102's positioned at Don Muang. Other aircraft in the country at that time were the T-28's at Udorn (28 in August); four KC-135's at Don Muang; and several types of helicopters at the various bases for search and rescue activities. ^{2/}

Takhli, which had been without a tactical wing since the discontinuance of the 6235th Tactical Fighter Wing, Provisional, on 8 July, became home for the 355th TFW on 1 November. On the 27th, the 354th TFS arrived there and was assigned to the wing on permanent duty to replace one of the

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three TDY F-105 units. Another of the TDY units was replaced on 4 December by the 333rd TFS. The last of the temporary squadrons would not be replaced until 29 January 1966 when the 357th TFS would arrive. November also brought additional changes at Korat. The remaining TDY F-105 squadron left and two PCS F-105 units moved in. They were the 421st and 469th TFS. ^{8/}

In December, the F-4C squadron was pulled out of Korat, leaving only F-105's at that base. Although that was the only December change affecting the number of aircraft authorized in Thailand, additional organizational changes occurred as PCS units continued to replace those on TDY. The 47th and 431st Tactical Fighter Squadrons at Ubon were transferred out with the PCS assignment of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing on 8 December. The 8th received its two F-4C squadrons, the 433rd and 497th TFS later in the same month. ^{9/}

The end of the year unit strength for Thailand included two squadrons of F-105's at Korat and three at Takhli; and two squadrons of F-4C's at Ubon. The other units remained as reported for August.

B. COMMAND AND CONTROL OF AIR FORCE UNITS IN THAILAND

1. Establishment of Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand

The most important action relating to the force buildup in Thailand was the establishment of the Deputy Commander concept at Udorn. The position was the forerunner of the command and control element which would, initially, control only Udorn-based Air Force units, but would later control operations of all Air Force combat units in Thailand as delegated by the Commander, 2AD.

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On 5 June 1964, Major General Joseph H. Moore, Commander 2d Air Division (2AD) recommended to PACAF that Det 2, 35th Tactical Group be established at Udorn. General Moore's proposal was that the detachment serve as an "organizational vehicle" for Laos operations. Operational command and control would be vested in an officer who would bear the title of "Deputy Commander for Laos Affairs." A Control and Reporting Post and an Air Support Operations Center (CRP and ASOC) would be put into operation at Udorn to provide the deputy commander with a means to exercise operational control over tactical operations. While the position of deputy commander would come from existing 2AD manpower authorizations, General Moore asked for 24 new spaces to man the ASOC. Administrative and logistic support for the deputy commander function would be furnished by the 35th Tactical Group at Don Muang. ^{10/}

Detachment 2, 35th Tactical Group was established at Udorn on 11 June, only six days after General Moore's recommendation. Among its functions was to provide for the ASOC as well as base support and to prevent interference by MACTHAI and JUSMACTHAI. ^{11/} On 18 July, a 2AD advance party arrived at Udorn to form the nucleus of the new organization, including the CRP/ASOC. With the group was Colonel Jack H. McCreery, who was appointed the Deputy Commander for 2AD Thailand/Laos (formerly titled, ^{12/} "Dep Cmr for Laos Affairs") on the 25th of the same month.

Colonel McCreery came under 2AD at Tan Son Nhut, which, in turn, was under 13th Air Force (13AF), Clark AFB, Philippines. The 35th Tactical Group at Don Muang also was assigned to 2AD. Prior to the establishment of the deputy commander position, the 35th controlled Air Force units in

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Thailand; but when the new position was created, PACAF suggested certain command, operational, and support arrangements it believed best suited to meet requirements of the new command. PACAF's proposal was for 2AD to retain command and control responsibilities, with support functions placed under the 35th Tactical Group. The deputy commander for 2AD Thailand to exercise command over the 35th and all other Thailand based elements assigned or attached to 2AD. ^{13/} It was not, however, to work out as proposed.

When Colonel McCreery was appointed deputy commander on 25 July, he was at first directed to assume operational control of "all USAF units in the area." On 3 August, however, 2AD said that Colonel McCreery's command was limited to operational control of USAF units based at Udorn, only. At the same time, the deputy commander was told to be prepared "for planning purposes," to assume operational control of all USAF units in Thailand and Laos. The additional control would be granted only under contingency operations, and would be exercised by the deputy commander through the 35th Tactical Group Commander. The latter organization followed up with notice that it retained operational control of all USAF units in Thailand, except those at Udorn. These command limitations were incorporated into a 2AD regulation that detailed the deputy commander's organization and missions. ^{14/}

The CRP and ASOC were to serve important roles in the deputy commander's activities. Their mission was to perform basic tactical air control system functions necessary to the conduct of tactical air operations by Laotian and U.S. Air Forces in Laos.

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The name ASOC was a misnomer, for the facility was, in reality, a Tactical Air Control Center (TACC), and would later be renamed as such. It was initially called an ASOC, which did not suggest tactical activities, at a time when the Thailand Government, not wishing to risk its status of non-belligerency, was sensitive about the types of U.S. units in the country.

The ASOC was established to provide various services to the Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF). This included sortie apportionment and mission planning support to the Air Operations Center (AOC) at Vientiane; preparation of operations orders; assistance in setting up direct air request nets processing Close Air Support (CAS), reconnaissance, and airlift requests; determination of needs, and the coordination with RLAF, to integrate U.S. Air Force mission in Laos; and monitoring, by means of the CRP communications and radar facilities, U.S., and RLAF air missions in Laos. ^{15/}

Among the functions of the CRP, was to conduct radar surveillance over North Central Laos; receive similar information from the Ubon CRP, which covered Southern Laos; plot aircraft movements over Laos for the control of air operations over that country; provide communications between the ASOC and U.S. and RLAF aircraft; and detect hostile aircraft and be ^{16/} ready to control air defense actions against them.

Exactly one month after Colonel McCreery became the Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand, PACAF informed Hq USAF that the increased USAF operations at Udorn had resulted in a requirement for more than 600 TDY personnel. This, added to TDY personnel deployed elsewhere throughout Southeast Asia, led PACAF to ask USAF to establish fixed manpower requirements and allocate spaces for permanent personnel assignments. PACAF said that in order to

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establish a permanent Air Force operation, spaces for 28 officers, 450 airmen, and 41 local national civilians were needed at Udorn by September 1964 (fiscal year 2/65). Included in PACAF's request was an increase in the manpower ceiling of Hq 2AD to authorize a space for the Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand. That position, as noted earlier, was being filled from existing 2AD resources. ^{17/}

On 18 October, Det 2, 35th Tactical Group, was discontinued. Replacing it was a newly organized unit - the 333rd Air Base Squadron. Six months later Colonel McCreery's overseas tour had ended and he was relieved by Colonel John R. Murphy, who assumed command on 27 May 1965 and was subsequently promoted to Brigadier General. ^{18/}

2. Division of Command Authority

July 1965 brought the separation of Second Air Division (2AD) from 13th Air Force (13AF). With it came a division of authority in the control of Air Force units in Thailand that was to create confusion in organizational matters.

Because of the buildup in Southeast Asia, 2AD had experienced rapid growth and was approaching the size of a numbered Air Force. On 8 July, 2AD was relieved from assignment to 13AF and placed directly under PACAF. ^{19/} This put the division in the unique position of being on an equal basis to a numbered Air Force while retaining division identity. It also produced an unwieldy command structure in Thailand. While 2AD was charged with operational activities originating from Thailand bases, the units remained assigned to 13AF. The latter exercised administrative and logistics control. Confusion frequently crept into organizational matters.

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Coincident with the separation of the division from 13AF, the 6234th Tactical Fighter Wing had been organized at Korat Air Base. The Chief of Staff, Air Force (CSAF), subsequently announced his decision that the combat support units in Thailand (including those at Don Muang) would be assigned to the 6234th. Second Air Division assumed the decision was based on a desire to eliminate command "layering," and that the 6234th would be the highest level USAF organization in the country. The division felt that the assignment of the support units to the wing was a poor solution to command problems. It believed a workable organization was possible, but that it had to recognize that the Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand, was carrying additional responsibilities which would continue regardless of the final organizational arrangement. 20/

The division pointed out that the prevailing confusion in organizational matters dictated an urgent need for a simplified command structure. It proposed that the ASOC at Udorn remain in operation there, under the same director, but that the Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand, and his staff moved to Korat. There, the deputy commander would, under 2AD's plan, retain his functions, but would also command the 6234th TFW, and his title would be modified to "Commander 6234th TFW/Dep Cdr 2AD Thailand." Actual command of the wing would be delegated to a deputy wing commander. The Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand, would answer only to the Commander 2AD, thus establishing a direct simple chain of command from 2AD to a single individual in Thailand. 21/

The CSAF decision, said 2AD, "infers logistic responsibilities for Thailand will be (the) responsibility of 13AF." The division argued

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that, for itself, such an arrangement would result in "greater complexity and inefficiency." While acknowledging such a separation of operational and logistic responsibilities could be effected, 2AD said it was a poor solution which would result in duplication of functions and personnel at its own headquarters and that of 13AF. The division also pointed out that the arrangement could foster conditions unfavorable to operations. ^{22/}

3. Redesignation of Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand

In November, CINCPACAF asked CSAF for immediate approval to construct a new headquarters building at Korat to house the Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand, who was to be redesignated and moved to the new location as soon as possible. Although the move to Korat had been proposed by 2AD, no other part of the latter command's proposal was accepted. Instead, CINCPACAF announced that, as a result of conclusions reached at a Hq USAF/PACAF conference at Hickam AFB on 20-21 October, the "Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand," title would be changed to "Deputy Commander 2d Air Division/13th Air Force, Thailand (Dep Cmr 2/13 Thai)." The facility to be built at Korat was intended to give the new 2/13 Dep Cmr means to control, direct, and coordinate a full range of air operations in support of a major military operation. That CINCPACAF believed the command structure in Thailand in urgent need of improvement was illustrated in its request for quick approval for construction of the headquarters building at Korat. He said the move to that base would insure an effective command organization in Thailand and that the facility was needed immediately and could not wait for normal funding. ^{23/}

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The senior officer who was to fill the new Dep Cmdr 2/13 Thai's position would, as the title suggested, represent both 2AD and 13AF. Through him, the 2AD Commander at Tan Son Nhut would exercise operational control of Thailand-based PACAF forces. He would, at the same time, carry out support responsibilities vested in 13AF. Additionally, as the single senior PACAF representative and coordinating authority, the Dep Cmdr 2/13 Thailand would pass to Air Force agencies, any instructions on policy and administration originated by the U.S. Embassy or COMUSMACTHAI. ^{24/}

Major General Charles R. Bond, Jr., was named to fill the newly created position. Brigadier General Murphy, who had been the Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand, since 27 May, was to remain assigned to the headquarters and become the Assistant Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand. Although the position was established in November, General Bond had until January 7, 1966 to report for duty. He would assume his new role at Udorn and move to Korat as soon as the new headquarters was ready. ^{25/}

General Bond had not yet arrived at Udorn at year's end and it remained to be seen how well the new command structure would work. While the Air Force now had a single individual in command, the fact remained that two separate commands still had a voice in USAF activities in Thailand.

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CHAPTER II

THE WAR IN LAOS

A. THE POLITICAL SITUATION

While U.S. involvement in the Vietnamese war received widespread publicity, little was said about American activities in Laos, and even less about the use of bases in Thailand for the launch of U.S. air strikes against targets in Laos as well as Vietnam. But events leading up to the positioning of USAF units in Thailand, and their eventual use in Laos, could be traced back to 1962.

The 1962 Geneva Accords had been intended to bring an end to the internal strife in Laos. Under that settlement and preceding internal Laos agreements, the Royal Laos Government (RLG) had been set up as a coalition with equal representation by Conservatives (Rightists), Neutralists, and the left wing Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX). ^{1/} The latter was the political front of the Communist Pathet Laos.

From the beginning, however, the Pathet Laos (PL) retained control over territory they held at the time of the Geneva Accords, and the NLHX refused to open such territory to central government authority. At the same time, the leftists stood in the way of reconciliation efforts aimed at reunification. ^{2/}

After April 1963, the NLHX made no further pretense at taking part in the coalition government, and continuous efforts thereafter brought no signs of restoring unity. ^{3/}

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Meanwhile, PL forces were applying subversion, pressure, and outright attacks in an effort to destroy the Neutralist force, which was the foundation of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's political power. The PL also sought to gain full control of areas occupied jointly by them and the Neutralists. Concurrently, they started launching widely scattered attacks against anti-communist Mao tribesmen, whittling away at areas controlled by the latter. Reinforced by Viet Minh (VM) Communists, infiltrated into Laos from North Vietnam, they seized control of key points and threatened important points of access to the Mekong Valley. ^{4/}

First reactions to the Communist activities brought closer cooperation between the Neutralist and Conservative forces and their political elements. The limited effectiveness of the central government and the continued territorial gains of the Communists, however, diminished Conservative hopes for governmental stabilization. Resultant Conservative pressures for reform and a tougher policy against the Communists led to an attempted coup d'etat against the Souvanna Phouma government in April 1964. Although the coup failed and Phouma remained the prime minister, the pressure continued. Thus, Communist military and political activities not only threatened the strategic Mekong, but contributed to internal tensions which could lead to the overthrow of the Royal Laos Government (RLG) from within. ^{5/}

Phouma strengthened his position as prime minister somewhat in mid-1964 when, on 4 June, he approved Operation Triangle. The purpose of that operation was the elimination of a potentially dangerous pocket of PL and VM forces from the area of the junction of Routes 7 and 13 in the central

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region of Northern Laos. The combined strength of the Forces Armees Royales (FAR) and the Neutralists, aided by friendly Meo tribesmen and the Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF), ended the operation successfully by the end of July. ^{6/}

Another abortive coup attempt, this one in February 1965, resulted in further improvement in Phouma's political position, as well as an apparent improvement in political stability. This attempt, triggered by a political power struggle, ended with the defeat of Rightist General Phoumi Nosavan. Nosavan went into exile in Bangkok, Thailand, but Bangkok was not far from Laos and his presence created an uneasy situation which continued to weaken attempts to further strengthen the military and political effort. ^{7/}

In the early months of 1965, the stability of the central government benefitted when Laos King Sri Savang Vatthana, who had by then become more active in Laotian political affairs, gave strong backing to Prime Minister Phouma. Despite this, however, and the fact that Phouma's position was strengthened, the political stability of the government remained shaky through the first half of 1965. In that state, it was feared it could be upset by even a slight military or political reversal. ^{8/}

Political unrest and a flurry of rumore, some predicting coup attempts, preceded national assembly elections held on 18 July. Although tensions eased considerably following the elections, relations among some military leaders and the general staff remained to be smoothed out. General Thao Ma, in particular, was the target of what the U.S. Air Attache (AIRA) in Vientiane labelled as "unwarranted derogatory and potentially damaging attacks

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by someone, or possibly several groups of individuals." General Ma was the Commander of the Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF). His coordination of air-ground activity was credited with having welded the joint forces into a highly effective fighting unit. It was feared that his removal from command would do serious damage to the efficiency of the Air Force. In March, USAIRA identified Major General Kouprasith, Zone 5 Commander (and later also a member of the general staff), as one of "certain people" who, for several months, had been condemning General Ma, although Kouprasith failed to make clear the reasons for his condemnation.^{9/}

AIRA believed General Ma was a loyal patriot, a dedicated military man concerned for the future of Laos, who harbored no political ambitions. The RLAF was, said AIRA, "an important, or possibly deciding factor, in (the) balance of power consideration." AIRA believed political aspirants would make continuing efforts to control the RLAF or win the allegiance of its commander to a particular faction. The general belief was that, General Ma, as the RLAF Commander, would never align himself or the Air Force with any faction, supporting instead those who worked for the good of the country.^{10/}

There were those who thought that if Kouprasith rose to a dominant position in government, he would try to negotiate some sort of Neutralist arrangement. General Ma told AIRA that if there was no change in the trend of the government, the Communists would soon gain control. He added that Group Mobile (GM) commanders in the south would not permit that to happen, and that a stepped-up drive against the Communists could be expected. If such a drive materialized, he said, it would be in hopes

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of receiving help from the U.S. or the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). It was known that General Ma had already held numerous meetings with FAR leaders in southern Laos, and with General Vang Pao, the Mao Commander of Military Region II, and General Phasouk, Commander of Military Region IV. ^{11/}

In mid-July, Ma charged that the Kouprasith faction was circulating rumors that he (Ma) was planning a coup d'etat. General Ma believed the spreading of that rumor would be continued until emotions were sufficiently aroused, after which Kouprasith would use it as an excuse to move against him. General Ma assured Ambassador William H. Sullivan, U.S. Ambassador to Laos, that he had no intentions of starting a coup, but if attacked, he would defend himself. At the same time, however, Ma gave evidence that steps had already been taken in event it became necessary to take control of the government. As a constitution had been secretly written, and individuals identified to fill various governmental positions, Ma was confident he had enough support to execute a successful coup but said he would make no move without U.S. approval. American officials, he said, would be given the constitution for review, recommendations, and approval before it was published. ^{12/}

General Ma's troubles were not with General Kouprasith alone. He felt that the general staff wanted to control the RLAF to further their own political ambitions and that they wished to either destroy or discredit him. He had been stripped of authority to promote enlisted personnel and, as of early July 1965, there had been no promotions in the RLAF for more than a year. His authority was limited to that of a

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battalion commander. The general staff had never accepted General Ma because of his refusal to affiliate with any political group. The Air Force had never been represented at any of their meetings even though it had been suggested by AIRA. ^{13/}

What appeared to be an attempt to assassinate General Ma lent credence to his fear that someone wanted him out of the way. On 5 July, he attended a farewell party in Vientiane for an outgoing AIRA and Assistant AIRA (AAIRA). Following the party, General Ma was enroute by auto to the home of an American official when an auto directly ahead of his was demolished in an explosion believed intended for him. ^{14/}

On 22 July, the outgoing Army Attache (ARMA), his replacement, and the new AIRA met Laos generals' Ouane, Boun Pone, and Kouprasith, all of the general staff. At the meeting, General Kouprasith said he felt there was a need for attache support in areas where commanders kept too far from general staff control. He aimed his comments specifically at Generals' Ma and Vang Pao. General Ouane expressed his view that General Ma needed to be "kept in line." The outgoing ARMA, in turn, asked the general staff to "quit needling General Ma, give him adequate recognition and cease treating him as on a precise parallel with (the) chief of signal corps or river flotilla; to recognize that they would not be in their seats today without his loyalty during recent past." The Air Attache stated he would continue to try to get Ma to establish closer liaison with the general staff. ^{15/}

In another meeting of ARMA with General Ouane on 27 July, Ouane said he realized General Ma must remain as Commander of the RLAF and told

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ARMA he would talk with Ma about a proposal to increase and reorganize the RLAF staff, a move which Ouane hoped would eliminate many difficulties. General Ouane also promised to look into other RLAF problems. ^{16/}

The elections were followed by three months of political maneuvering during which Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma was busy resigning the cabinet and seeking national assembly approval for the changes. The Fifth National Assembly officially opened on 16 August. In its first session, it elected Phoui Sananikone as its president, and Chao Boun Im Na Champassek (brother of Prince Boun Oum) as vice president. By mid-September, a 15-man cabinet had been approved by the national assembly. The Laos Communist faction was given the posts of Deputy Premier, Minister of National Education, Minister of Information, and two secretaries of state. With the cabinet approval, the political scene in the latter part of September settled down to a leisurely pace. ^{17/} Although the political situation remained calm the rest of the year, alignment of the assembly remained unfirm.

General Vang Pao raised an issue, which he said had been ignored in the past, when he pointed out there were northern and southern factions within the army command. While the southern group was by far the strongest, because of the large number of officers born in southern Laos, Vang Pao felt that the civilian-military administration in Vientiane did not adequately reflect the southern preponderance. He argued that until this changed, there was a possibility of trouble. ^{18/}

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B. THE MILITARY SITUATION

1. Laos Armed Forces

The Forces Armee Royale (FAR) and Neutralists comprised the ground forces responsive to the Laos central government. Collectively, they comprised the Royal Laotian Army (RLA). Both groups contained factions loyal to individual, political, or military leaders. This had been a contributing factor to past coup attempts. ^{19/}

When Communist PL forces renewed their attacks in 1962, the central government was ill-prepared to resist militarily. Its army consisted of only approximately 25,000 men; but, with military assistance from the U.S., it grew to more than three times that size and, by May of 1965, the FAR numbered about 66,000 and the Neutralists, about 12,000. Additionally, the two forces received cooperation from an estimated 16,200 Meo tribesmen. ^{20/}

Initially, the FAR was equipped with an assortment of French, Communist, and U.S. weapons making training and logistic support difficult. However, by May 1965, most of its units had been supplied with U.S. equipment, and re-equipment of the Neutralist forces was underway. Although progress was being made in the tactical employment of both FAR and Neutralist forces, a number of factors, including a lack of experienced leaders and incompetence in the use of arms, continued to restrict their combat use to short periods. Another factor was poor logistics resulting from maintenance of forces too large for the support units. The U.S. Military Assistance Program (MAP) was geared to support 67,200 troops, but the American Embassy believed the actual number was between

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73,000 and 75,000. Other estimates, as reported earlier, went as high as 78,000. ^{21/}

In encounters with guerilla or PL forces, the FAR could maintain internal security in regions it already held, but it didn't do as well when the PL was bolstered by North Vietnamese troops, or against pure North Vietnamese units. These latter were considerably more aggressive than the timid Laos soldiers. ^{22/} During the second half of the year, however, the FAR showed increasing willingness to engage in battle and launched a number of offensives, the most extensive of which were in Sam Neua Province and the Central Panhandle.

During 1965, there were no signs that Laos government forces could function without continued U.S. aid. The country's economy would not permit support of its military forces from its own resources. It could not produce even basic supplies, or earn foreign exchange to purchase them abroad. Its armed forces relied completely on foreign aid for logistical support. Adding to the problem of maintaining Laotian Armed Forces was the available taxable income, which yielded insufficient funds to cover military expenses, especially the payroll. ^{23/}

The U.S. considered its main effort in the war in Southeast Asia to be in Vietnam. Its first concern in Laos was not to drive the Communists out of the territory they already controlled, but to halt further incursions into areas of free Laos. Hence, the war in Laos was referred to as a "holding" effort, aimed at "containing" the Communists. It was believed this goal could be realized by continued economic aid to the Laos government, and complete logistical support to its Armed Forces. ^{24/}

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2. Pathet Laos and PAVN Forces

Communist forces in Laos not only threatened to completely dominate the country, but posed a threat as well to neighboring Thailand. Furthermore, control of much of the southern panhandle gave the North Vietnamese a supply and communications route to support Viet Cong activities in South Vietnam.

At mid-year 1965, Pathet Laos forces numbered an estimated 25,950, and controlled alone, or jointly with North Vietnamese, large areas of northern, central, and southern Laos. No area was occupied entirely by a single faction. In some areas of PL territory, pro-western forces operated in varying strengths. Conversely, PL guerrillas were active throughout all of Laos. PL strength continued to increase during the year and stood at about 33,200 at the end of October. ^{25/} The shaded area on the map (Page 28) depicts the portion of Laos under PL control.

Prior to September 1964, it had been believed, but not proven, that North Vietnamese forces were active in Laos. Anti-communist elements had, for several years, charged that regulars from North Vietnam's Peoples Army of Vietnam (PAVN) - or Viet Minh (VM), as they came to be known- were taking part in the Laos' civil war. At a Paris meeting of the three Laotian political factions during Aug-Sep 1965, Prime Minister Phouma had challenged PL denials of the presence of North Vietnamese in the country by insisting on verification by the International Control Commission (ICC). Leftist leader, Souphanouvong, was unyielding in his refusal to permit verification. ^{26/}

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The first concrete evidence of North Vietnamese in Laos came in mid-September 1964 with the capture of three regulars of the PAVN. One of the trio admitted that two battalions of his regiment had been serving in Laos and that his unit took part in an assault on the Neutralists in the Plaine des Jarres during May of that year. ^{27/}

By mid-July 1965, intelligence reports estimated that some 5,000 PAVN troops in operational units were serving in Laos. In addition, approximately 3,000 PAVN elements were on detached duty with PL units. In making these estimates, it was kept in mind that North Vietnam could quickly move at least four regular PAVN divisions across the border. ^{28/}

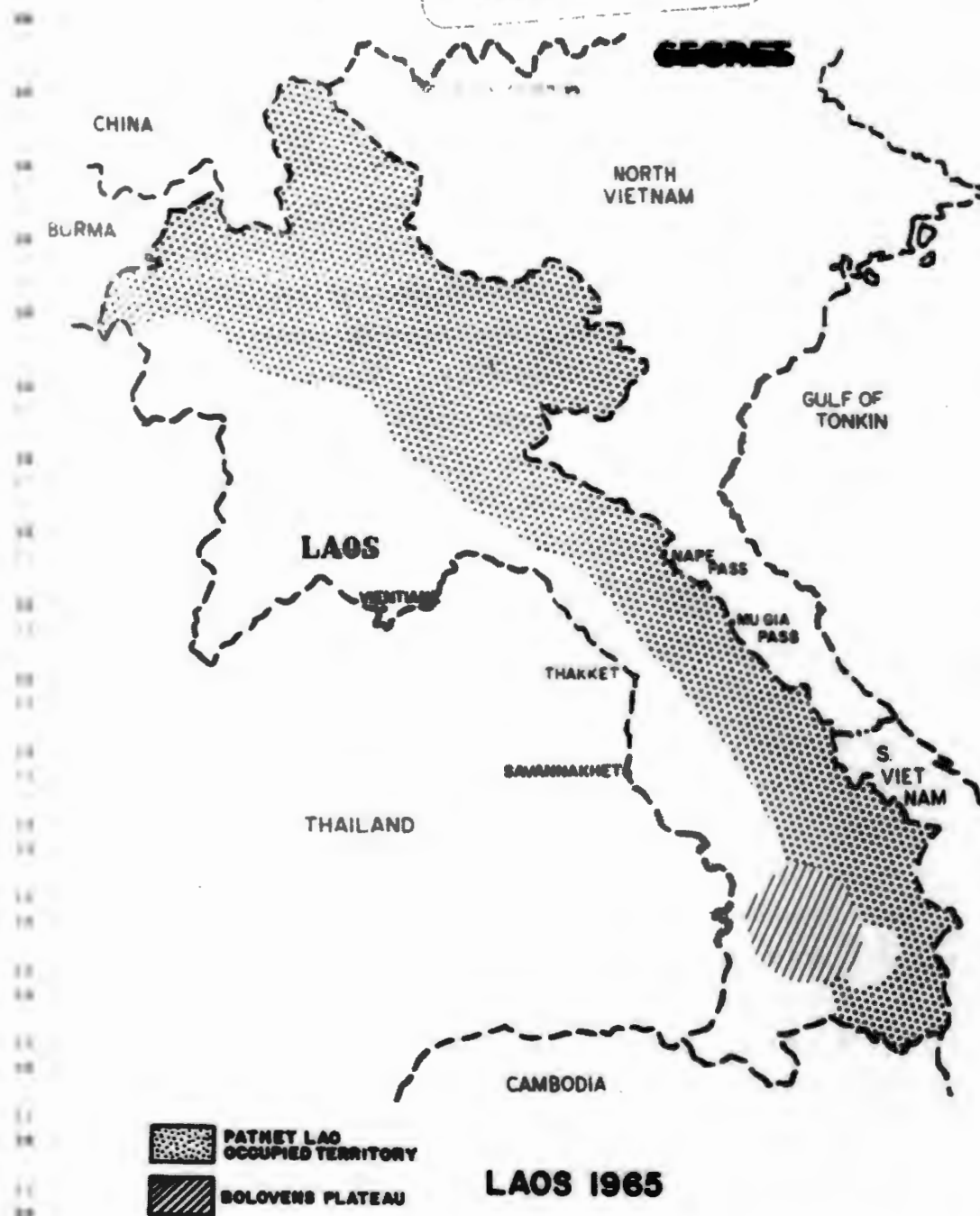
PL forces were organized into 89 infantry battalions of 400 to 500 men each; nine artillery and nine AAA batteries; four guerrilla battalions of 200 to 500 men each; and three security battalions of 250 to 300 men each. These units comprised the PL's regular forces. ^{29/} In addition, the provincial committee of the PL, the NLHX front, had organized an unknown number of quasi-military forces. The latter were scattered throughout the country and conducted armed propaganda, reconnaissance, sabotage, and ambush. PAVN units in the country consisted of 10 to 13 battalions of 450 to 500 men each, and two artillery battalions. ^{30/}

The first half of 1965 saw no important change in the distribution of PL and PAVN troops in Laos. The seven northern provinces contained the largest numbers. Of the seven, Xieng Khouang Province had the greatest concentration, with nine PL and three to five PAVN infantry battalions, three PL AAA batteries, and two PAVN artillery batteries. As PL strength increased during the latter half of the year, Xieng Khouang Province again

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received the greatest number with the addition of 850 troops. Other large increases included 650 troops to Sam Neua Province, 550 to Savannakhet Province, and 400 to Khammouane Province. ^{31/}

On 4 October, the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane heard a PL radio broadcast which announced that PL armed forces had assumed the new identity of "Laotian Peoples Liberation Army (Forces Armees De Liberation Du Peuple Lao). The terminology closely paralleled that used by the Viet Cong's National Liberation Front in South Vietnam, and raised suspicion that the PL was thinking of an open break with the Government of National Union, rejection of tri-partism, and eventual establishment of a "liberation front" in Laos. ^{32/}

C. AIR SUPPORT FOR FAR AND NEUTRALISTS

Before June 1964, morale within the Royal Laotian Government (RLG) was at low ebb due to political instability and military setbacks. Less than two weeks earlier, on 17 May, General Kong Le's Neutralists had been driven from the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ) by the PL and PAVN. ^{33/}

The battle of the PDJ, however, marked the beginning of increased air support for FAR and Neutralist forces, and this, in turn, improved the morale of the ground troops and hampered Communist movements.

From May until December 1964, the FAR and Neutralist forces received all of their air support from General Thao Ma's RLAF T-28's (including T-28's flown by Thai pilots starting in June). Then, in December, USAF jet fighters from South Vietnam bases entered the conflict. U.S. aircraft from Thailand bases commenced strikes in Laos in early 1965.

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1. Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF)

Until the May attack against the Neutralists, the RLAF possessed only four T-28's plus a few non-tactical aircraft types, and its aircraft were restricted to the use of only rockets and guns. On 17 May, with the PDJ attack in its second day, American Ambassador Leonard Unger (then Ambassador to Laos) authorized the use of 100 and 500 pound bombs against the attacking forces. The next day, four more T-28's were pressed into the battle. The latter aircraft were loaned to the RLAF by Detachment 6, 1st Air Commando Wing of the Special Air Warfare Training Center (SAW Det 6). SAW Det 6 was a U.S. Air Force unit stationed at Udorn Airfield, Thailand where, since its arrival in March 1964, it had been providing advanced training for RLAF pilots and maintenance personnel under the U.S. Military Assistance Program (MAP). The additional T-28's were not enough, and, by the 19th, the Neutralists were in retreat. In a futile effort to help Kong Le's forces to regroup, General Ma took his T-28's out of Savannakhet, in the Laos Panhandle, and moved them north to Vientiane, thus placing them nearer the PDJ. ^{34/}

With the Neutralists losing ground, the need was recognized for more aircraft and pilots. On 21 May, a decision was made to augment the RLAF with five Thai pilots, but because of a lack of experienced personnel and facilities, and an uncertainty as to how well the Laos and Thai pilots would work together, General Ma wanted the U.S. to assume control of the Thai augmentation force. As a result, they were placed under the operational control of the American Embassy's Air Attache (AIRA). By 25 May, although 20 T-28's were available for support of

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FAR and Neutralist forces, there was still a shortage of pilots. On the 25th and 26th, U.S. civilian pilots employed by the Air American Company (a CIA sponsored organization at Udorn Airfield) secretly flew 20 strike missions in T-28's. Their use was discontinued, however, for fear of adverse world opinion if discovered. ^{35/}

Meanwhile, SAW Det 6 had started training a group of ten Thai pilots. By June 1964, their training completed, the Thai were flying strike missions in Laos. The manner in which they carried out these first missions was used as a pattern for future operations by Thai pilots. Taking off from Udorn Airfield, they flew up to Wattay Airport, Vientiane, where their aircraft were loaded with weapons and the pilots briefed on their missions. After completing each day's missions, they returned to Udorn. ^{36/}

2. T-28 Pilot Training at Udorn

As noted earlier, SAW Det 6 had been training RLAF pilots and maintenance personnel prior to the PDJ battle. WATERPUMP, as the training program for Laos personnel was known, was the detachment's primary responsibility. The U.S. Air Force, however, was more deeply involved in the T-28 program than just the training of RLAF personnel. The 333rd Air Base Squadron (replaced by the 6232d Combat Support Group in July 1965) provided maintenance support for all T-28's used in training as well as combat operations and USAF personnel from Udorn were sent on temporary duty to Vientiane to assist in aircraft launching operations. Similarly, Air Force personnel were provided for General Ma's T-28's,

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which had returned to Savannakhet, following their temporary deployment to Vientiane during the PDJ battle. Initially, SAW Det 6 had provided personnel for both locations, but, in mid-November 1964, the 333rd Air Base Squadron assumed the responsibility, freeing SAW Det 6 to concentrate on an expanding pilot training program. ^{37/}

Following completion of training of the first ten pilots in June 1964, Det 6 commenced training of additional Thai pilots and, at the same time, continuing the RLAF training program. At the beginning of September of that year, there were 15 T-28 qualified Laos pilots in the RLAF, with four others scheduled to complete training on the 15th of the month. Another four were undergoing training in the United States but would not finish until August 1965. Additionally, there were 16 qualified Thai pilots. Following the pattern set in June, the latter group was based at Udorn, but flew missions in Laos after first stopping at Vientiane for weapons loading. Nine other Thai were scheduled to start training later in September and complete in mid-October. Thereafter, a new group of pilots was to start training at Udorn each month in order to maintain a level of 20 operational T-28 pilots. ^{38/}

With the training of Thai pilots established as a continuing program, a meeting was held at Udorn Airfield, in mid-September 1964, by representatives of the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF), USAF, and AIRA. Out of it came a number of agreements concerning the future course of the program. During training, all RTAF pilot trainees were to retain their RTAF status, and come under control of the 23rd Composite Squadron, ^{39/} an RTAF unit at Udorn. When actually assigned to combat operations in

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Laos, the Thai pilots were legally discharged from RTAF and flew as mercenaries.

Training was divided into two phases. Phase I consisted of general academic and flying training, Phase II - a concentrated flying program. While in the first phase, pilots displaying the greatest potential for combat operations were chosen to go into phase two. The remainder were reassigned to Composite Squadron 23 for continuation training. The latter unit was to furnish enough combat-ready pilots for the last two weeks of training to replace pilots due for relief from operations, thus helping to maintain the required 20-pilot level. Each RTAF pilot was to either fly 100 missions in a four month period, or complete six months of operational flying, whichever occurred first.^{40/}

The schedule called for an input of nine Thai pilots to be training during October 1964, eight in November, and nine every six weeks thereafter. Only three of each nine were to be rotated into tactical operations to fly missions in Laos. The remaining six of each group were to return to the RTAF where they would serve as instructors.^{41/}

The training of pilots for return to the RTAF was a departure from the original agreement for the support of T-28 operations in Laos. As a result of this change, the Deputy Chief of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, Thailand (DEPCHJUSMAG THAI) called for reclarification of training objectives at Udorn, as well as a new agreement to establish responsibilities of the various agencies involved in the program. JUSMAG's interest in the T-28 program stemmed from his responsibility

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for the management and supervision of the Laos Military Assistance Program (MAP). In that capacity, he controlled the use of MAP equipment, funds, and materials.

The answer JUSMAG sought came out of a conference held in Bangkok on 1 October. Training objectives remained unchanged, with the input of Thai pilot trainees to be nine each six weeks, and maintenance of the 20-pilot pool. Relative to operations, it was determined that Det 6 would retain control of students, while the Air Attache in Vientiane and Det 6 both controlled tactical pilots. The actual selection of tactical pilots to undergo training, however, was made by the RTAF. AIRA's control over the pilots were exercised in Laos where that office was charged with responsibility for tactical operations. Det 6 itself, and hence the training program, came under the jurisdiction of the 2d Air Division (2AD), Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam. The latter organization delegated control to the Deputy Commander 2AD at Udorn Airfield. ^{42/}

In January 1965, the DEPCHJUSMAG THAI spelled out in greater detail the responsibilities of the various agencies involved in the T-28 program. While the requirement remained to train Thai pilots to support the 20-pilot pool, JUSMAG reiterated that Det 6's primary task was, as it had been in the past, to train and upgrade the Royal Laotian Air Force. The American Embassy in Vientiane, which, through its Air Attache, took operational control of the T-28's when they crossed from Thailand into Laos, also determined policy for the use of aircraft for training, their locations, and the priority of tasks for combat-ready aircraft. The embassy also operated an Air Operations Center (AOC) at

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Vientiane and provided policy guidance to the DEPCHJUSMAG remained in charge of the Military Assistance Program for Laos. ^{43/} To better understand the nature of the control each agency had over the program, the reader is referred to the chart on page 36.

The chief of the JUSMAG Thailand served as coordinator for the Royal Thai and U.S. Governments in agreements concerning the use of Thai facilities for the T-28 program. He also was the coordinator for the Thai input of Thai pilots to maintain the 20-pilot pool. ^{44/}

3. T-28 Aircraft Availability

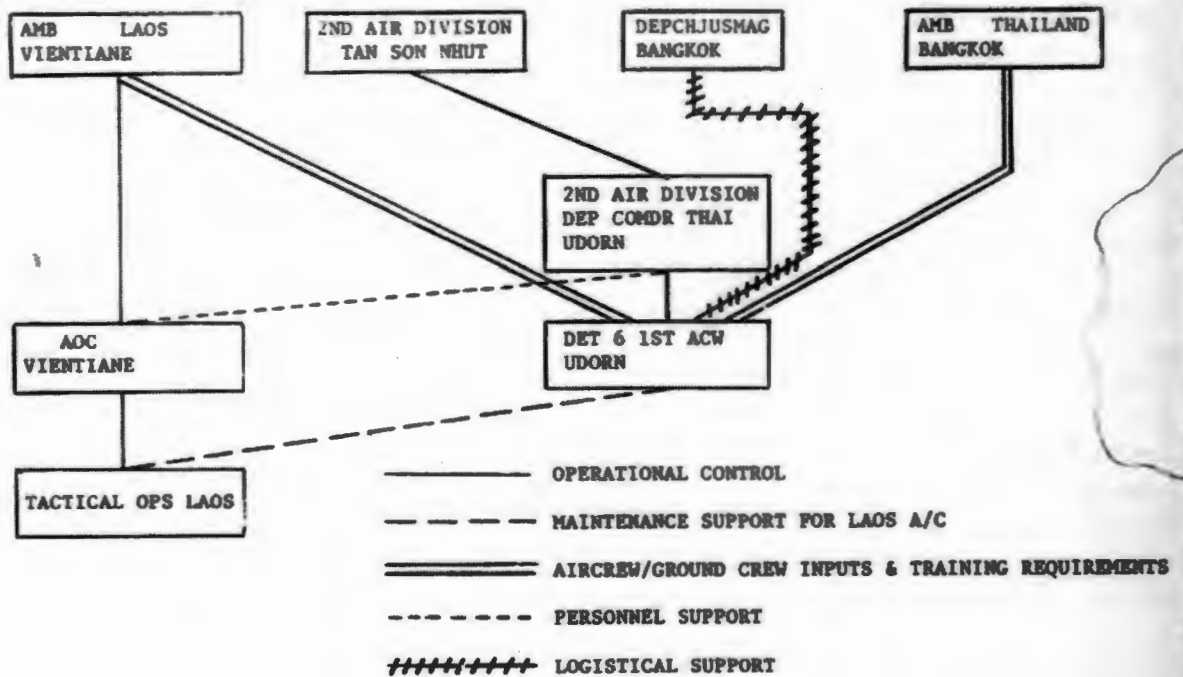
Even as details of the expanded pilot training program were emerging from the various meetings, there was growing concern over the need for more T-28 aircraft. As noted earlier, 20 had been pressed into service in Laos by late May 1964. In September of that year, the number for training and combat totalled 33. Ten of that number were flown by the RLAF at Savannakhet. Four of the ten were on loan to the RLAF from SAN Det 6. The remaining 23 aircraft, all based at Udorn, were employed for training and deployment to Vientiane for strikes in Laos. Three of the latter group were RT-28's (reconnaissance aircraft). During the 1 October 1964 JUSMAG conference in Bangkok, it was established that a total of 40 aircraft were needed. The figure included four T-28's for training and 36 for tactical missions. Four of the 36 could be substituted by RT-28's. Both the AMEMB and DEPCHJUSMAG supported the 40-aircraft requirements. ^{45/}

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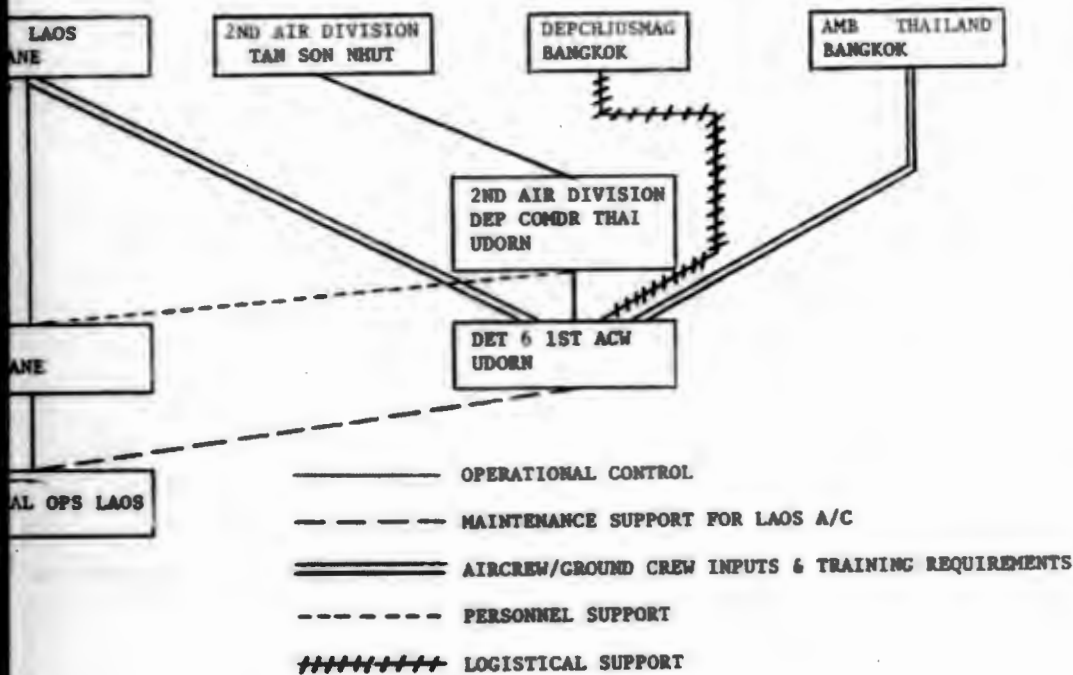
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OPERATIONAL CONTROL - LAOS OPERATIONS



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Adding to the aircraft shortage during the latter part of 1964 were such problems as losses, battle damage, aircraft not operationally ready due to supply difficulties (supply MORS), and normal maintenance attrition. Additionally, aircraft loaned to the RLAF received poor maintenance while deployed at Savannakhet. The practice there had been to return the aircraft to Udorn for replacements, but every aircraft returned had first been kept at Savannakhet until extensive maintenance was needed. Thus, when the 333rd Air Base Squadron received those T-28's, they were often out of service for extended periods. ^{46/}

In early November 1964, SAW Det 6 informed 2AD that the 333rd could not offer sustained maintenance support for the T-28 training program under existing conditions with the limited number of aircraft available. The 333rd's maintenance officer pointed out that his organization had to make available approximately six aircraft for the Thai pilots, who were flying 12 to 18 missions daily from Vientiane. These were the Udorn-based aircraft which flew up to Vientiane and returned to Udorn each day upon completion of their mission. Udorn's aircraft assets were taxed further in November when four more were sent to Savannakhet on temporary loan. These were in addition to the four already there from a previous loan (the original four had come to be considered as a "permanent" loan). T-28's at Savannakhet now numbered 13. ^{47/}

Both Det 6 and the 333rd recommended the return of the loaned aircraft from Savannakhet. The 333rd, in making the recommendation, asked that operational requirements be determined daily for both the northern (Vientiane) and eastern (Savannakhet) bases, and that aircraft

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be deployed on a daily basis to both locations, as required. Det 6 also recommended that more T-28's be provided to the 333rd. The American Ambassador lent support to the need for more aircraft when he voiced his views that the aircraft pool for Laos operations was "dangerously low". ^{48/}

Mid-November brought some relief for the T-28 shortage when the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), authorized the transfer of five RT-28's to SAW Det 6. On the 24th of the same month, 2AD informed the Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand of still other actions by CINCPAC to transfer T-28's and RT-28's from Vietnam. The latter transfers were to bring the total available aircraft to 43 - three more than the 40-plane requirements set at the October JUSMAG meeting. By late December 1964, 40 aircraft were available, including ^{49/} 13 RT-28D's, 17 T-28D's, all at Udorn, plus five T-28D's at Savannakhet.

Other T-28 transfers planned by CINCPAC were to provide 16 more aircraft for Laos operations by mid-April 1965. These were to come from a group of 20 being modified at Columbus, Ohio. The first seven were scheduled to arrive in March 1965, and the remainder by 15 April. ^{50/}

The program suffered a setback in January 1965 when, on the 24th, the guns of a T-28 parked at Wattay Airport, Vientiane, were triggered accidentally, striking the fuel tank of another T-28. The latter blew up, touching off fires which destroyed eight other T-28's. This accident, coupled with previous attrition losses, reduced the number of T-28's to 28 available for Laos operations. On 28 January, the losses were partially offset by the RIAP, which loaned five of its T-28's for Laos operations. This left the program seven short of the required 40. The inventory then dropped to 31 aircraft in early February and remained at that level through March. A crash landing near Udorn on 30 March reduced the total to 30. Although some of the T-28's from Columbus, Ohio, had been scheduled to arrive during the February-March period, the first three arrived after the middle of April. By August, there were 42 T-28's assigned. Attrition reduced the figure to 35 in November and December. ^{51/}

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4. T-28 Air Activity

The effectiveness of the RLAF was responsible for most of the successful offensives and counter-offensives of the FAR and Neutralists. Its Close Air Support (CAS) was repeatedly credited with turning the tide of battle, as well as being the moving factor in improving the morale of the ground forces. From May until December 1964, RLAF T-28's (which included those flown by Thai pilots) provided the only CAS for the Royal Laotian Army, as well as the only harassment to Communist truck traffic. RLAF attacks during that period were largely limited to Route 7 in the central region of northern Laos. In November 1964, General Ma withdrew his T-28's from Vientiane (where they had been since the PL/PAVN attack on the Plaine des Jarres) and returned them to Savannakhet. The Udorn-based, Thai piloted T-28's continued to operate out of Vientiane. From that month on, the Vientiane-based aircraft concentrated their missions in northern Laos, while those at Savannakhet flew strikes in the Panhandle. Targets, both north and south, included troop positions, supply, and fuel-oil-lubricant storage areas, military installations, bridges, and truck parks, as well as CAS missions for ground forces.

In 1965, the RLAF continued to fly strike missions, but the FAR and Neutralists were engaging the enemy in offensives and counter-offensives more frequently - especially during the second half of the year. This resulted in a greater CAS role for the T-28's.

An early success, credited to the RLAF, came in March, when two battalions, one PL and one PAVN, destroyed a bridge on Route 9 in a night attack at Dong Hene. The Communist battalions, whose combined strength

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numbered 500 troops, were met by a force of only 80 defenders. At the outset of the attack, Colonel Tanh, Commander of the defending force, told his soldiers that if they could hold out till daylight, General Ma would arrive with his T-28's. Encouraged, they held their positions despite the overwhelming odds until the T-28's came. Although the Communist succeeded in destroying the bridge, they suffered heavy losses from aerial attacks. When they retreated, they left behind 112 dead and were seen carrying many dead and wounded. ^{52/}

During July, the FAR launched three widely scattered offensives. In the north, Meo General Vang Pao, Commander of Military Zone II, opened what was described as a limited offensive near Na Khang in Sam Neua Province. Another limited offensive was started in Military Zone III, north of Dong Hene in the central panhandle, and a third, southwest of Attapeu, in the southern panhandle (Military Zone IV). The ensuing months saw other offensives launched by FAR and Neutralist forces as well as the Communists. By year's end, the PL/PAVN manifested increasing resistance and the situation became uncertain in some areas.

a. Sam Neua Offensive

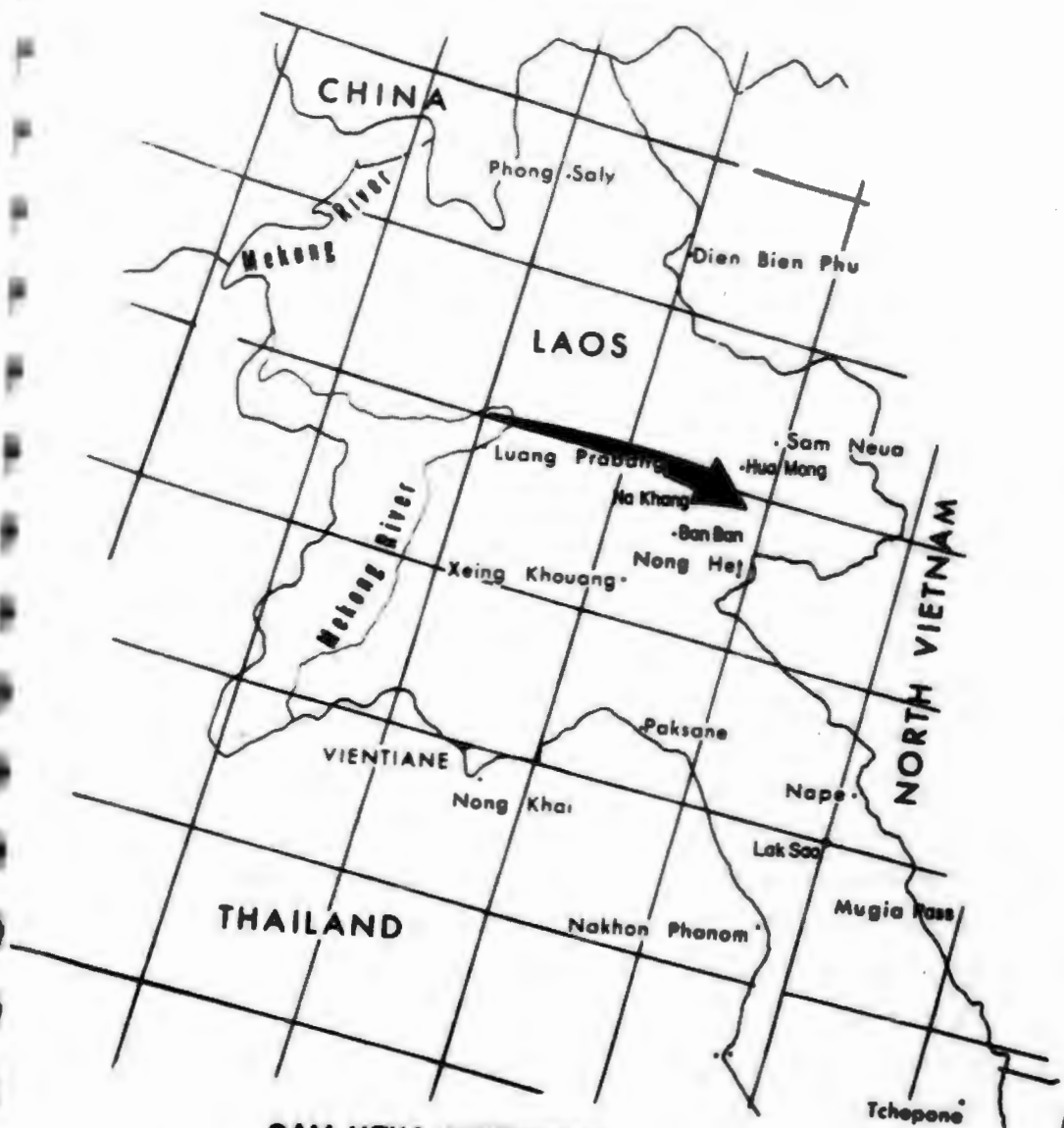
In January, Ambassador Graham Martin, U.S. Ambassador in Thailand, cited the increased Pathet Laos activity in the vicinity of Sam Neua (See map on page 41) as a reason for his belief the Barrel Roll program (See discussion of Barrel Roll later in this chapter) should be expanded. Meanwhile, Ambassador William H. Sullivan of Laos (who had replaced Leonard Unger) told Lt General Joseph H. Moore, 2AD Commander,

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SAM NEUA OFFENSIVE
10-22 JULY, 1968

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that he was being pressed to use U.S. jet aircraft against enemy concentrations in the Sam Neua area. ^{53/}

In Sam Neua Province several areas had already been lost to the Communists, and intelligence reports in March showed that PL/PAVN units were continuing a buildup. ^{54/} Although the buildup had been under

observation since the beginning of the year, it was 10 July before FAR forces launched an offensive near Na Khang in southwest Sam Neua Province. ^{55/} Elements taking part in the offensive were volunteer battalions (BV) 22, 26, and 27, BR 250, and infantry battalions (BI) 1 and 2, as well as Mao Auto-defense De Choc (ADC) units. The first objective was to capture Hua Muong, 25 kilometers northeast of Na Khang. Infantry Battalions 1 and 2 were to advance to the east, while BV 23, 26, and 27 moved to the north. The remaining elements were to carry out offensive feints.

Between Na Khang and Hua Muong lay Phou Kao Fa Mut and Them Seua, both key terrain features in the defense of Hua Muong. Recognizing this, the PL/PAVN set up strong defenses at those locations. Although 17 Communist positions fell between 10-22 July, two companies from FAR volunteer battalion 25 and two more from BV 27 were repulsed in an attempt to take Phou Kao Fa Mut (hill). Seventeen T-28 sorties against PL/PAVN positions in that area also failed. By the 22nd, a FAR battalion gained control of a hill about 500 meters south of Phou Kao Fa Mut. Meanwhile, a PAVN unit on the latter had suffered heavy losses from air strikes, but two other units had moved onto the hill. More than 40 sorties were flown against the position in a three-day period

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beginning 21 July. On the 22nd, the FAR seized the south slope of Phou Keo Fa Mut, and the next day gained the top, leaving PAVN troops on only the north side. On the 24th, the RLAF attacked the north side, inflicting heavy losses and forcing most of the remaining troops to flee. By the following morning, FAR units held all of Phou Keo Fa Mut. ^{56/}

As July closed, the Sam Neua offensive was making slow headway. BV 26 was within six kilometers of Hua Muong and an all out T-28 effort had started. The air assaults were taking a heavy toll on the Communists who, in turn, were trying to reinforce. The special air effort also included CAS by Bango/Whiplash aircraft. (Bango identified the F4C's and Whiplash the F-105's.) A tactic employed was for the ground forces to move into an area after it had been subjected to day-long attacks by T-28's with USAF jets hitting nearby troops and gun positions.

In mid-August, General Vang Pao praised the air strikes. He said his forces were outnumbered about three to one, and that air support had offset the imbalance and resulted in the continuing success of the five week old offensive. It now appeared certain that PL troops had been withdrawn from the battle, as every contact was with PAVN units. ^{57/}

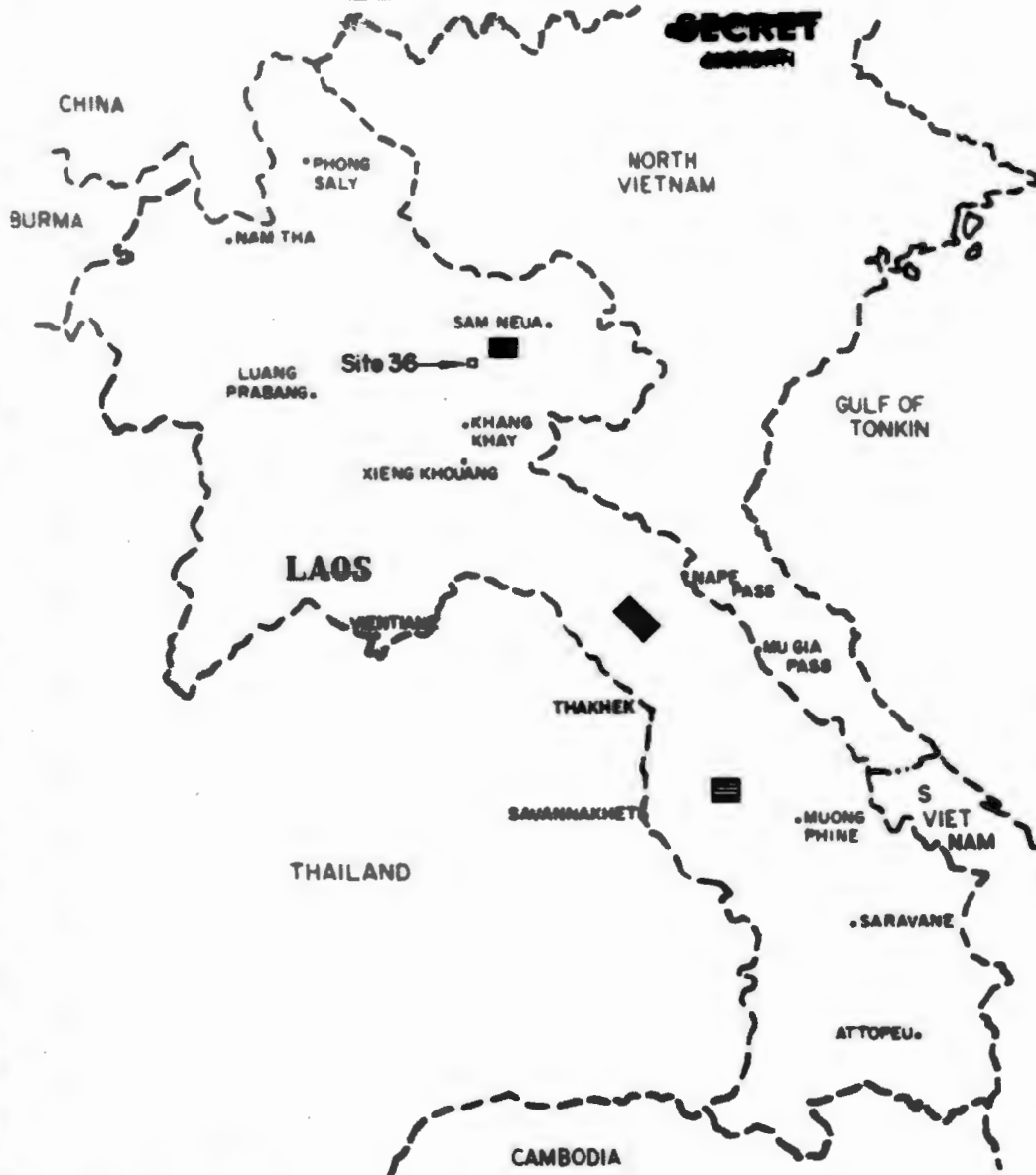
The presence of RLAF and USAF aircraft brought about a sharp curtailment of daytime Communist troop movements and logistic efforts. As a result, the ground war was being fought largely at night. This gave the FAR and Neutralist forces an added advantage. The Communists normally carried out two or three attacks nightly. By knowing the

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LEGEND:

■ HUA MUONG SECTOR

■ GM 12 SECTOR

■ GM 21 SECTOR

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location and distance of their positions, it could be determined approximately when they would have to start in order to complete an attack and return to their positions before daylight. This, in turn, exposed them to counter attacks or harassment.

Before September ended, FAR forces moved into Hua Muong, but, by the latter half of December, fighting continued and it had become uncertain as to whether they could hold the area. ^{58/}

Meanwhile, throughout the country, fighting intensified and spread in areas of previously launched campaigns. New fighting erupted in several other areas. In northwest Laos, a Communist unit had situated itself 32 kilometers southwest of Nam Touei. Three weeks later, on 21 August, four PL companies were gathering in Nam Tha. A few days earlier two ADC companies situated 53 kilometers southeast of Nam Touei withdrew in the face of a PL attack. The PL also attacked another ADC company 45 kilometers northeast of Nam Touei. ^{59/} Site 36 in Sam Neua Province, a small forward operating base, used by search and rescue helicopters and Forward Air controlled (FAC) aircraft, came under Communist mortar attack in September. ^{60/} In the same province, FAR forces met increasing resistance in their attempts to seize positions along Route 6. Near Luang Prabang, Communist troops captured a number of small but important positions.

October brought the beginning of the dry season. With it, the PL/PAVN seized the initiative with a sudden surge in military operations, especially in Military Zone III in the central panhandle. On the northern edge of the Plaine des Jarres, a FAR offensive, aimed at Ban Tha,

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ground to a halt in the face of heavy resistance. At the same time, the Neutralists were fighting to take Phou Kout, a strategically situated hill on the western edge of the PDJ. They hoped to capture the hill as part of an overall effort to ring the PDJ Communist stronghold. In November, following three days of U.S. jet aircraft strikes against Phou Kout, the Neutralists were making ready for an attack. ^{61/}

b. Attapeu Offensive:

General Phasouk, Commander of Military Region IV, headed an offensive, started on 28 July, as a clearing operation along the Se Kong River southwest of Attapeu. Infantry Battalion 4 attacked north of the river on the 28th and made contact with the enemy the same afternoon. Meanwhile, three ADC companies attacked south of the river. General Phasouk observed operations from a command post on a bluff on the Bolevens Plateau. From the CP, two 105mm howitzers were shelling Communist positions in support of the advance. In addition, six T-28's had been positioned at Pakse and were flying CAS missions. ^{62/}

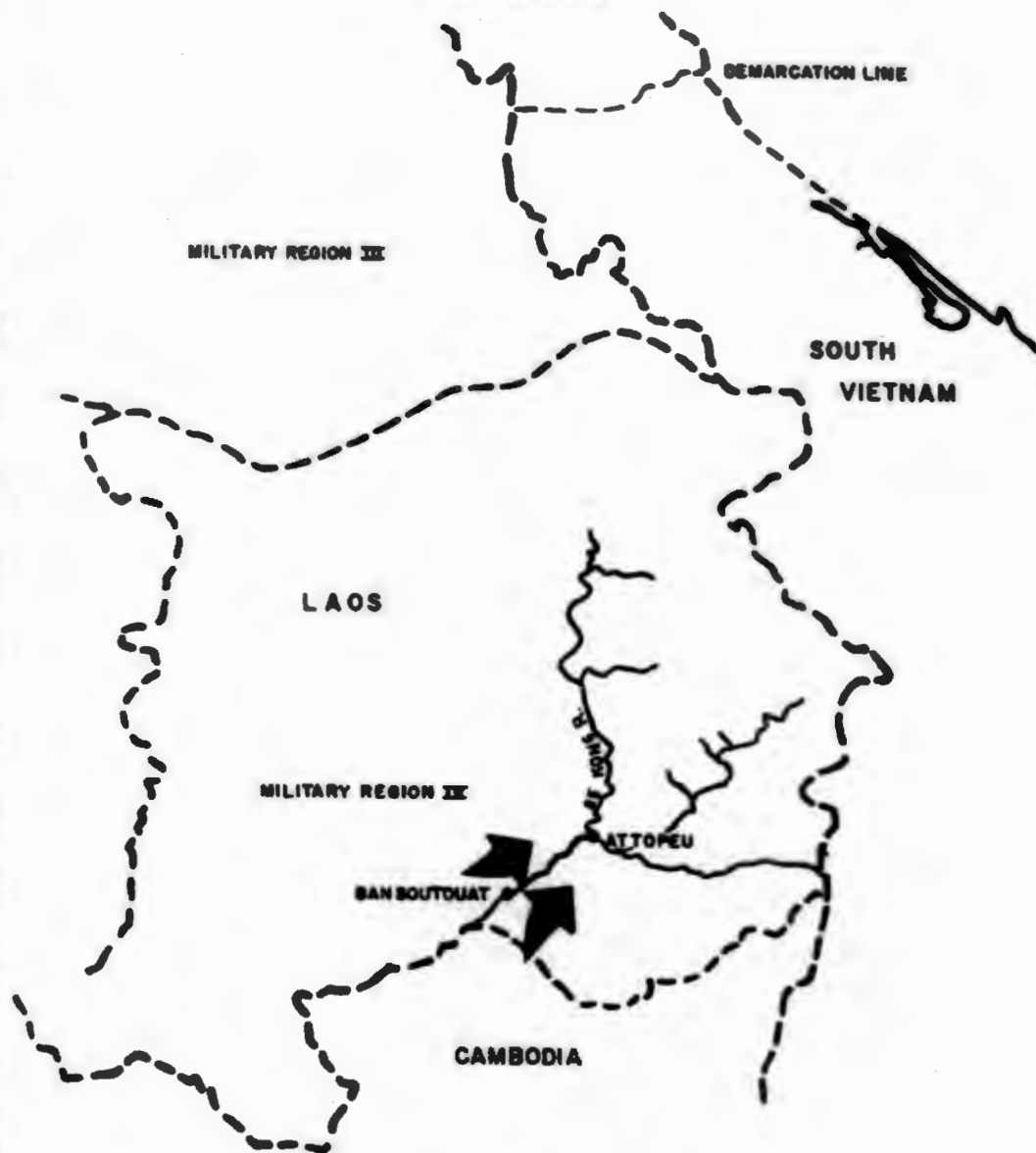
In early August, General Phasouk's forces continued to advance, meeting only light opposition. Pathet Laos soldiers were scattering northward onto the plateau and east across the Se Kong. Bad weather and rugged terrain were proving to be greater obstacles than the PL. ^{63/} Three PL battalions tried, in October, to push northeast across the Se Kong near Ban Soutouat but were repulsed, after which ^{64/} there was little activity in Zone IV for the rest of the year.

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ATTOPEU OFFENSIVE
JULY-AUGUST 1965

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c. Operations in the Panhandle:

In Military Zone III, which came under the command of General La, an offensive was launched in July from Dong Hene. The operation, which was intended to clear the Communist from an area northeast of Dong Hene in the GM 21 sector, spread northward in August when another drive got underway to retake the Nam Theun Valley in the GM 12 sector northeast of Thakhek. At the end of July, elements of GM 21, covered by BR 370 to the north and GM 15 to the south, started a move north and northeast to route PL/PAVN troops from high ground south of the Se Moi River. Progress was slowed by bad weather, rough terrain, and Communist guerrilla tactics. ^{65/}

As the push into the Nam Theun Valley advanced to the clean-up stage, other plans called for an eastward move across Karst to the vicinity of Ban Pha Dang and Ban Tieu. From the latter, a company was to move northwest along the Nam Hia Boun River to Ban Na Him Mok, the final objective. A second column was to head northwest from Ban Pha Dang to take Ban Mong Kok. If these two operations succeeded, additional elements of GM 12 might be assigned to capture Ban Khen in order to secure the Nam Hia Boun Valley. Any attempts by the Communists to move in reinforcements were to be stopped by special blocking teams. ^{66/}

By September, the blocking teams were in position in the GM 12 sector. An Auto-defense De Choc (ADC) Company south of the Nam Theun was blocking reinforcements from the Kam Kaut area. Stopping up the Nam Hia Boun Valley north of Thong Long were BR 340 and two sections of BI23. Operations in the sector gained momentum in the second half of

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September and, on the 23d, FAR forces moved into Ban Khen, where they found 47 dead PL troops, all apparently from T-28 strikes. During the early part of October, GM 12 units seized Ban Na Him Nak. Meanwhile, east of Savannakhet in the GM 12 sector, a FAR company, under attack by two PL companies, withdrew to Dong Nhna. ^{67/}

With FAR forces in Ban Khen, elements of GM 12 reached the Nam Theun River and the Hia Boum Valley operation appeared almost at an end when between the 10th and the 14th of October, approximately 1,000 Communist troops were reported moving west on Route 12. Then, with the beginning of the dry season the PL seized the initiative with a sudden increase in activity. On 11 November, heavy fighting broke out near Thakhek and the Communists threatened to cut the Panhandle in half. ^{68/}

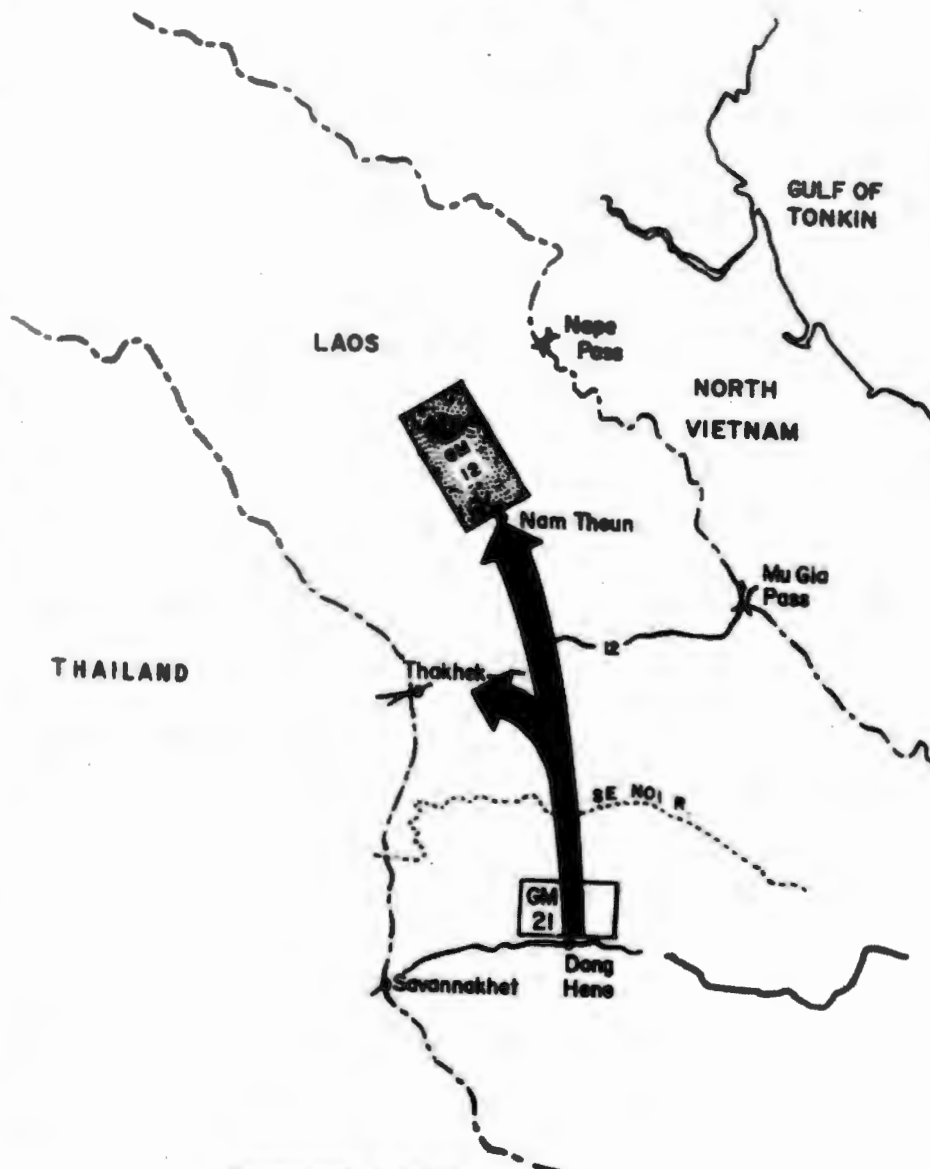
About 800 PL troops were within seven kilometers of Thakhek and five kilometers from Khammouane. It was believed the attackers were part of the 1,000 troops earlier seen on Route 12. Captured equipment, later, showed a majority to be North Vietnamese. The FAR was getting air and artillery support from Thakhek but required ground reinforcements. Two battalions from Vientiane and an airborne battalion from Savannakhet were hurried in and a counter-offensive got underway on the 14th. Both the RLAF and USAF provided Close Air Support (CAS). Ambassador Sullivan credited their combined effort as the factor enabling the FAR to regain control of the situation. In one area alone, T-28 strikes killed approximately 100 Communist troops. ^{69/}

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PANHANDLE OPERATIONS
JULY-NOVEMBER 1965

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5. Effects of T-28 Air Strikes

A probable (and important) effect of air strikes in Laos was the failure of the Communists to carry out their yearly offensive to seize more Laos territory. In previous years, they had launched spring offensives for that purpose. During the beginning of the dry season in the closing months of 1964, Communist truck traffic into Laos had appeared greater than in preceding years. Traffic was heavy into spring of 1965. Since this was the normal period of Communist buildup for their spring offensive, RLAF and U.S. aircraft had struck frequently to hinder these stockpiling efforts. With the arrival of September 1965, and still no offensive, it began to appear that a major drive would not be attempted. ^{70/}

Close Air Support (CAS) played a key role in Laos in offensives and counter-offensives. RLAF T-28's and USAF F-105's and F4C's flew CAS in all three of the July offensives as well as numerous operations that followed. In the Attapeu offensive, they hammered away at Lines of Communications (LOC's), disrupting the Communist logistics system. General Vang Pao was "elated" with the T-28's. In his region, RLAF strikes killed Communist troops in trenches hidden by as much as three meters of earth. All 146 sorties flown from Savannakhet during the 22 July - 5 August period were in support of the FAR offensive north of Dong Hene and southwest of Attapeu. Similarly, the 147 sorties from Vientiane, in the same period, supported operations in the vicinity of Hua Muong in the Sam Neua offensive. Twenty-four RLAF sorties on a single day (6 August) hit entrenchments and killed 170-190 soldiers. ^{71/}

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In the Hua Muong area, the combined efforts of air and ground operations forced the Communists to almost completely abandon daytime movements of troops and supplies. When FAR forces had mopped up in the Phou Keo Pa Mut and headed north toward the Hua Muong area, General Vang Pao reported the PL/PAVN were unable to hold their positions because of the air strikes. ^{72/}

Air strikes, coupled with rains, rendered roads almost impassable and the Communists resorted to air resupply in central Laos. Their flights decreased in July and August (the middle of the rainy season) but increased again in September when flying weather improved. In October, as the dry season approached, Communist air activity continued to increase then fell off in November. ^{73/}

Meanwhile, in May, the American Ambassador at Vientiane had been receiving reports of paratroops made by the Communists during their air resupply effort. The drops were being made in the Sam Neua area and had been seen over Hua Muong. He asked 2AD if there was some way to intercept the aircraft. ^{74/}

At the end of May, a PACAF proposed plan for destroying the aircraft was approved by CINCPAC. On 2 June, Laos Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma gave his approval. Under the plan, nicknamed "Duck Soup", the first intercept had been planned for 3 June, but the American Embassy asked for a delay until the 4th. It wanted an intercept aircraft, on airborne alert, each night after the 4th and until the operation ended. However, it was the 5th before the alert went into effect. From then through the 10th, the alert status was maintained but no enemy aircraft

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were attacked. Then, a need to airlift supplies to Laos government units in the area resulted in a stand down of "Duck Soup" from 11 to 21 June. ^{75/}

At the end of the period, 2AD said the probability of success was not great enough to justify resumption. The Ambassador agreed but proposed as an alternative that two RLAF T-28's with Air America pilots, be employed. Use of the Air America pilots, however, was rejected in Washington. A final alternative suggested using Thai or Laos pilots. That was turned down by the Ambassador and the "Duck Soup" program was dropped. ^{76/}

Table 3 provides a breakdown of T-28 sorties flown from Vientiane and Savannakhet during the first half of the year. Because the Bango/Whiplash program provided Close Air Support (CAS) to Royal Laotian Army operations, they also are included in Table 4. ^{77/} (Note: Bango/Whiplash was not flown prior to July.)

TABLE 3

T-28 SORTIES: JAN-JUN 1965

<u>Month</u>	<u>Vientiane</u>	<u>Savannakhet</u>	<u>Total</u>
Jan	447	228	675
Feb	205	96	301
Mar	377	308	685
Apr	162	158	320
May	137	Unk	137
Jun	<u>139</u>	<u>Unk</u>	<u>139</u>
TOTAL	1467	790	2257

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TABLE 4

T-28 AND BANGO/WHIPLASH SORTIES
JUL - DEC 1965

Period	<u>Vientiane</u>	<u>Savannakhet</u>	<u>Total T-28 Sorties</u>	<u>Bango/ Whiplash</u>
1 Jul - 22 Jul	Unk	Unk		Unk
22 Jul - 2 Aug	146	147	293	Unk
6 Aug - 19 Aug	84	176	260	104
20 Aug - 2 Sep	81	115	196	45
3 Sep - 16 Sep	24	46	70	23
17 Sep - 30 Sep	105	170	275	Unk
1 Oct - 14 Oct	124	156	280	20
14 Oct - 28 Oct	109	144	253	16
29 Oct - 11 Nov	38	113	151	60
12 Nov - 25 Nov	56	55	111	120
26 Nov - 9 Dec	77	108	185	44
10 Dec - 23 Dec	Unk	Unk		Unk
24 Dec - 30 Dec	<u>56</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>68</u>
TOTAL	900	1294	2194	500

D. USAF INTERDICTION EFFORTS IN LAOS

In early 1964, the stream of logistical supplies flowing into Laos from North Vietnam (DRV) surged into a major river with tributaries running throughout the north. A tentative lifeline had been established along the Ho Chi Minh trail and there was little doubt that the Communists were making an all-out effort to stockpile materials for their onslaught against Southeast Asia.

Pathet Laos (PL) insurgents were in control of the Plaine des Jarres and were threatening Muong Soui where General Kong Le's Neutralist army had regrouped. A major offensive appeared imminent. The loss of Muong Soui would shatter the Neutralist forces and, once in control of that vital area, the Communists would have been in a strong position to take

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over the whole of northern Laos.

By July 1964, the large increase in supply and personnel movement, along Route 7, to the PL forces facing Kong Le, coupled with infiltration activity along the Ho Chi Minh trail, prompted the U.S. to consider eventual air interdiction operations and Close Air Support (CAS) for Royal Laos Government (RLG) forces.

Although USAF jet reconnaissance aircraft had been flying Yankee Team reconnaissance missions over the country since May, no U.S. strike aircraft had been employed. During the interim period, Royal Laos Air Force (RLAF) T-28's, with USAF air commando trained Laos and Thai pilots, provided the strike sorties for both interdiction and Close Air Support (CAS) operations. In July, the JCS asked CINCPAC to provide a detailed plan for cutting Route 7 with strikes by U.S. aircraft, using a reconnaissance cover. ^{78/}

The PDJ and the junction at Route 7 and 13, held by the PL, commanded all roads in northern Laos. For this reason, Route 7, the road of entry into the PDJ, was considered one of the most strategic and promising objectives for early strike and armed reconnaissance operations. ^{79/}

RLAF T-28's had had some success with interdiction strikes along this important supply artery, but the aircraft's ordnance capability was inadequate for some targets and the airplanes were available only in limited number. While acknowledging the aircraft's limitations, the American Ambassador to Laos, Leonard Unger, wanted to continue the use of RLAF T-28's in most interdiction operations. The Ambassador felt that prolonged harassment, rather than large scale attacks, was more desirable

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and would be more acceptable to the Laotians. He did agree, however, that the more difficult targets could be struck by American jets. ^{80/}

Near the end of September, the RLAF gave approval for use of its T-28's in the proposed interdiction strikes along Route 7. The Ambassador in Vientiane announced that the aircraft would go against 13 targets, including Mu Gia Pass, on 14 Oct 1964. U.S. participation in the strikes was the responsibility of 2AD Yankee Team units. 2AD handled the details of tactical planning, communications, and command control of U.S. aircraft. These aircraft were authorized for use in high cover support, flak suppression roles, and search and rescue operations. Armed Yankee Team reconnaissance missions were also authorized to strike targets beyond the capability of the RLAF T-28's. ^{81/}

The T-28 missions began on October 14. The first target of the series was Mu Gia Pass, one of the main entry points into Laos from the DRV, and one of two such passes destined to receive considerable attention during the coming year. USAF F-100's and RF-101's based in South Vietnam (RVN) took part in the operations. All 13 targets assigned to the series were hit and the last missions were flown on 27 October. Although initial reports indicated some success, final analysis showed overall results to be below expectations. ^{82/}

Although the expected PL offensive had yet to materialize by late October, a heavy increase in truck traffic was reported by the new American Ambassador in Vientiane, William E. Sullivan. A special effort by the Communists to reinforce and resupply Pathet Laos/Viet Minh (PL/VN) positions in the PDJ was apparent. Renewed recommendations for approval

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of Yankee Team strikes against Route 7 were made, and the first USAF interdiction mission was finally approved and flown. Four F-105 strike aircraft; eight F-100's, flying MIG cover, and three RF-101 BDA/WX (Battle Damage Assessment/Weather) aircraft took part in the first mission -- an armed reconnaissance sortie along Route 8 and a strike against the Nape Highway bridge -- 14 Dec 1964. Negligible damage to targets was reported. ^{83/}

1. Barrel Roll

During the first three months of Barrel Roll operations, as the new interdiction program was to be called, more than 50 percent of the effort was devoted to armed reconnaissance of various highways and roads in northern Laos and the Panhandle. In the first three months of 1965, 48 Barrel Roll missions were flown. Thirty of these early missions were armed reconnaissance flights covering the major supply routes in Laos-- Routes 8, 7, 6, 9, 91, 23, 12, and 121. (See map, pg 58 .) Seventeen of the armed reconnaissance missions were given military areas or installations, supply points, and bridges as secondary targets. The remaining missions consisted of one special strike against a well defended bridge and the establishment of choke points at Mu Gia Pass, Nape Pass, and on Routes 6, 7, and 8. Since little or no traffic was sighted, most daytime armed reconnaissance flights struck secondary targets or returned to recovery bases with ordnance aboard. Night missions were not authorized alternate targets. ^{84/}

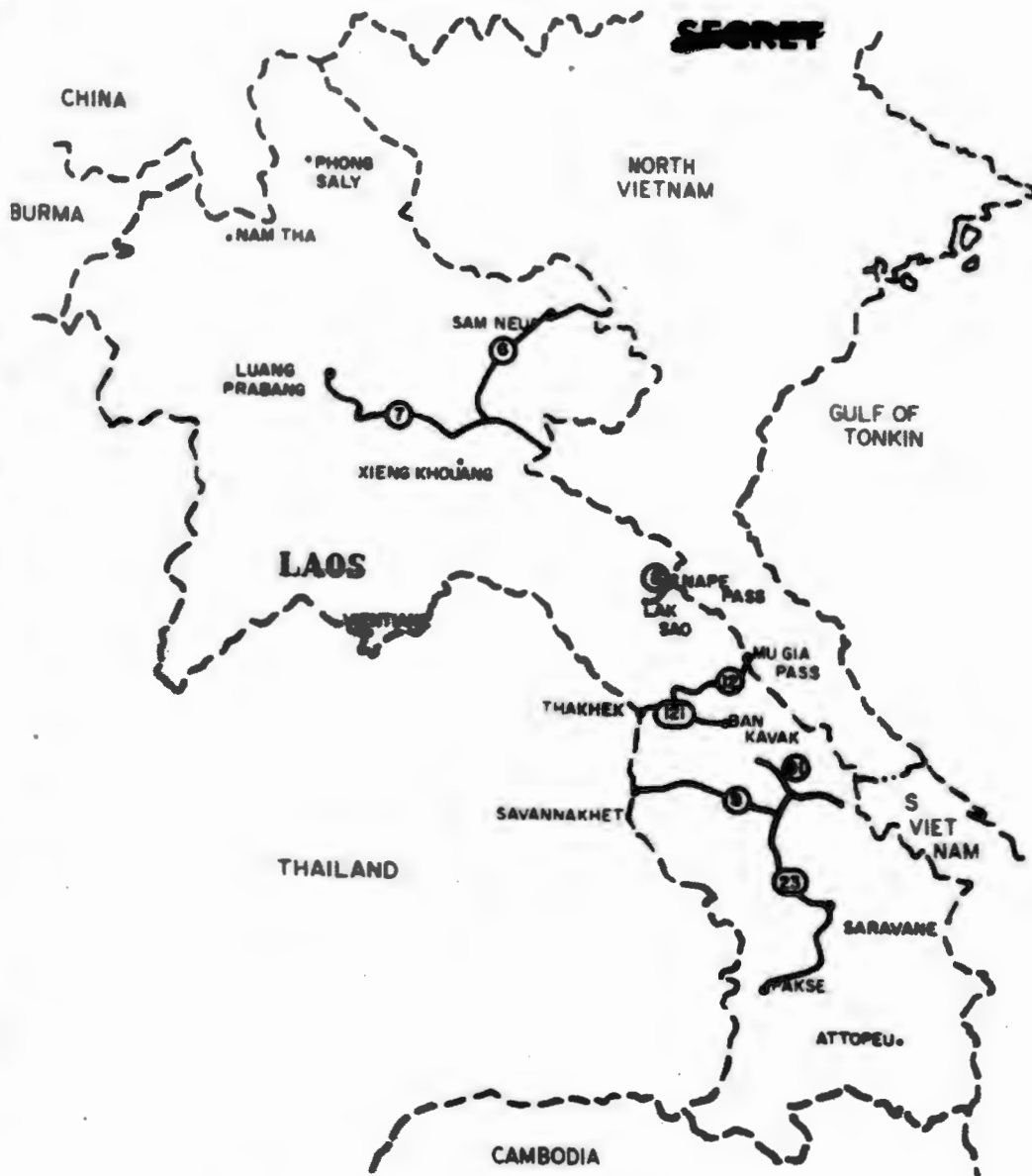
In January, CINCPAC told the JCS that he felt that, while vehicular traffic was a good target, too much effort was required to find

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Major Supply Routes

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such mobile objectives. Better results, he believed, could be obtained by concentrating on attacks against storage buildings, truck parks, petroleum, and ammunition storage dumps, as well as strikes against bridges and choke points. Attacks against these type targets would slow down or completely strangle the flow of Communist material and personnel. For this reason, CINCPAC believed that armed reconnaissance to locate mobile targets should play a secondary role to missions scheduled against fixed targets. ^{85/}

CINCPAC suggested that a combination of daylight armed reconnaissance, night route reconnaissance missions, Yankee Team flights, and RLAF T-28 operations should be used to provide a balanced, day and night, interdiction program to exert constant pressure on the Communist supply-resupply network. While admitting that traffic in Laos moved mostly at night, CINCPAC felt that day operations were generally more productive. ^{86/}

Concerning the overall interdiction program, CINCPAC said, "... to be effective (the) program must be responsive to the tactical situation in regard to routes flown, frequency and timing of missions and target selection. In addition, it must be a continuous, comprehensive, coordinated program with (an) inherent flexibility to rapidly respond to PL/VN tactics and patterns of operations..." ^{87/}

2. Night Interdiction

Night operations had been considered from the beginning. Near the end of 1964, JCS pointed out to CINCPAC that intelligence reports indicated that RLAF T-28 activities, combined with fear of Yankee Team

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reconnaissance operations, had forced much of the enemy vehicular traffic in Laos into night movement. CINCPAC was asked to draft a plan for night interdiction operations. Despite the recognized need for an effective nighttime operation and the early interest shown in night armed reconnaissance, only 12 out of 48 armed reconnaissance missions scheduled during the first three months of 1965 were flown after dark. As the armed reconnaissance concept began to lose ground in favor of strikes against fixed targets, night operations were also curtailed. By mid-year, armed reconnaissance accounted for only about 21 percent of the total interdiction missions flown by U.S. aircraft. It is significant to note that, although experience indicated that night reconnaissance flights were reporting 50 percent of the traffic sighting as compared to only 14 percent for daylight reconnaissance aircraft, more than half of all reconnaissance strike missions were flown during the day. ^{88/}

In the last half of 1965, enemy logistic movements continued to increase. Intelligence reports showed that most of the movements were made at night. In an analysis report, which reflected this trend, PACAF officials recommended a continuous air surveillance effort. The possible use of flare aircraft making random flare drops at night was contemplated, but night armed reconnaissance as well as daytime reconnaissance strikes continued to account for only a small number of the total missions in the interdiction program. By September, night missions had ceased entirely. However, B-57 aircraft and C-130 flareships began night flights again in October, primarily against targets and route segments in the Panhandle, and the number of B-57/C-130 sorties scheduled increased steadily during

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the next three months. In the last two weeks of December, 251 night sorties were flown by USAF aircraft. ^{89/}

3. Ban Ken Bridge Strike

Damage inflicted upon the enemy by the first armed reconnaissance missions in the Barrel Roll series had been disappointing. Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA) indicated nothing more than several buildings destroyed, several more severely damaged, and some minor damage to others. Two bridges listed as primary targets for the first two missions were unscathed. The search for ways and means to improve the interdiction program resulted in a shift of emphasis more and more toward fixed targets. In early January, a special mission was planned to perfect Barrel Roll techniques. The first important test of procedures in the new interdiction operation came with the attack on the Ban Ken Bridge on 13 Jan 1965. ^{90/}

The bridge, located on the eastern end of Route 7 near Ban Ken Village, where the strategic supply artery crossed the Nam Mat River, had been considered a prime target even before the first interdiction missions were flown. The Air Attache in Vientiane thought the bridge to be one of the most important targets available because it was, in his opinion, virtually impossible to circumvent. Three unsuccessful T-28 missions had been flown against the bridge in July 1964 and an RLAF T-28 had been lost to ground fire during one of these strikes. ^{91/}

MACV also considered the Ban Ken Bridge a vital interdiction target and suggested to CINCPAC that its destruction could effectively disrupt the flow of traffic from the DRV. In August 1964, CINCPAC

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suggested the Ban Ken Bridge as the first interdiction target to be struck by U.S. aircraft and that it be hit by Navy planes. However, MACV recommended the use of USAF F-100's and F-105's armed with cluster bomb units (CBU-2A), napalm for flak suppression, and air to ground missiles (AGM-12B) for bridge destruction. If the bridge was completely destroyed before the missiles were expended, the unused weapons were to be fired at surviving AA positions. At a meeting held in MACV headquarters in October 1964, the Ban Ken Bridge was again recommended as a desirable first target. MACV reiterated the feeling that its destruction was expected to inhibit the flow of supplies to PL/VN forces and, more than that, it would set the stage for subsequent attacks by U.S. forces on hard, land targets in the Panhandle as well as other sections of Route 5. ^{92/}

Despite the interest shown in the bridge, eight missions were flown against other armed reconnaissance targets in the Barrel Roll interdiction program before the JCS granted CINCPAC authority to conduct the special strike. ^{93/}

The Strike:

Sixteen F-105's and eight F-100's made up the strike force. An RF-101, with a pilot who was familiar with the area, was used to aid in target identification. The F-100's were armed with CBU, AGM missiles and 20mm ammo for flak suppression runs. There were some 35, 37/57mm, anti-aircraft artillery (AA) emplacements and ten automatic weapons guarding the bridge, and previous Barrel Roll missions had been directed to avoid the area. Only six of the F-105's were

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armed with AGM missiles as suggested previously. They also carried 750-pound bombs. The remaining ten strike aircraft were loaded with 750-pound bombs only. ^{94/}

The first wave of eight F-105's, flying in loose trail, destroyed the bridge with 65 bombs. The remaining eight F-105's expended their 750's in a clean-up action. The successful bomb run was made in a single pass for each of the 16 F-105's. However, additional passes were required for the six aircraft armed with missiles. The F-100's were also required to make multiple passes against the anti-aircraft gun emplacements. Since destruction of the target had been achieved by the 750-pound bombs, effectiveness of the missiles could not be judged. Dust and smoke created during the bomb run prevented accurate guidance of the AGM and few of the missiles impacted on target. ^{95/}

The necessity for multiple passes at the target and gun positions, combined with the accuracy of well-trained gun crews, resulted in the loss of one F-105 and an F-100. Battle damage to four other aircraft in the strike force was reported. ^{96/}

In addition to proving the feasibility of using Barrel Roll fighter-bombers against difficult targets, the Ban Kan Bridge mission made several other points. Lt General Joseph H. Moore, Commander 2AD, said the mission proved that the number of passes on a target should be restricted to the minimum required to accomplish the mission. He felt that, had the aircraft withdrawn after destruction of the Ban Kan Bridge had been confirmed, the loss of two aircraft and the battle damage inflicted on the others might have been avoided. He also believed

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that delivery tactics for the AGM at that time increased the vulnerability of delivery aircraft to enemy ground fire because of the necessity for multiple passes. He felt, the weapons potential on a single pass was 'rather low.' The general also concluded that mixed ordnance loads on single aircraft were undesirable. ^{97/}

On 19 January, the JCS directed the deletion of 28 targets from the then current interdiction strike list. The deletions included six bridges (one which was the Nape Highway Bridge partially destroyed by the RLAF in 1964) and nine military areas or installations. Fourteen targets were retained and listed as valid Barrel Roll daylight mission objectives, the majority of which were military areas. The span at Ban Nhommarath was the only bridge included. To this list, the JCS also recommended addition of eight new targets, subject to the approval of the American Ambassador to Laos. Significantly, the Nape and Mu Gia Pass choke points were included in the recommended additions. ^{98/}

MACV was dissatisfied with the military effectiveness of the Barrel Roll interdiction effort and proposed "on-call" strikes against predesignated choke points without frequency limitations. In addition, MACV wanted to establish three (key) choke points on Routes 12, 23, and 8, which were to be maintained by "reseeding" with quick-fuse bombs, for cratering, and delayed action and antidisturbance (butterfly) bombs which would harass work parties and add to the cratering. MACV suggested periodic armed reconnaissance of these choke points to destroy traffic which could build up behind blocked areas. He also pointed out that the proposed choke point program should not be subject to the 48 hour

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interval (sterile period) required between Barrel Roll flights at that time. ^{99/}

In February, after a brief show of interest in applying Barrel Roll operations to interdiction targets in the Sam Neua area which were programmed for strike by RLAF T-28's, Ambassador Sullivan also began to press for a choke point program. The Ambassador announced that he was opposed, at that time, to additional, special Barrel Roll missions, especially in the Sam Neua area. He indicated that he was more in favor of the MACV proposals. The Ambassador said, "...for the past few weeks, Vientiane, working closely with MACV, has been attempting to develop a systematic choke point program, with regular reseeding follow up, to be complimented by saturation armed recce, especially at night over well-defined infiltration road networks." ^{100/}

The Ambassador felt that there had been a delay in moving toward the choke point concept because of what he termed "the intrusion of several other Barrel Roll missions not associated with this central interdiction program." Although Ambassador Sullivan said that he was not against other targets "per se," he did feel that the number of such lucrative targets was not significant and that such objectives could be attacked after coherent choke point-reseeding-armed reconnaissance procedures had been firmly established. ^{101/}

Concurring with the Ambassador's view, MACV asked 2AD to develop an operation plan for creating and reseeding four choke points on Routes 6 and 65 and in the Sam Neua area, with initial air strikes to be accomplished at the rate of one each day over a four day period. Two cliffs

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on the northeast side of a hairpin turn, just southeast of Sam Neua on Route 6, was to be given first priority. ^{102/}

During March the emphasis away from armed reconnaissance became firmly established. Seventeen missions were flown against choke points at Nape and Mu Gia Passes and on Routes 6, 7, and 8, with Mu Gia and Nape Pass receiving the most attention. Only 12 armed route reconnaissance missions were flown during the same period. The choke point program accounted for an average of more than 50 percent of the missions until September. ^{103/}

4. Steel Tiger

In addition to the change in target emphasis, more and more of the interdiction effort was being shifted from the PDJ area in northern Laos to the Panhandle area south of Nape Pass. Further evidence of increased infiltration by PL/VM troops into the southern part of Laos prompted the JCS, near the end of March, to ask CINCPAC to plan a program to inhibit the infiltration operation. The new program was to begin on 3 April. JCS made it clear that they wanted a complete program, one which would provide a choke point/reseeding operation and special air strikes against fixed targets such as supply points, rest and refueling areas as well as other military installations supporting enemy infiltration efforts. The program would be conducted under the same ground rules as BR operations. There was one exception -- napalm could now be used when authorized by the American Ambassador to Laos. ^{104/}

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In outlining his concept of the new Steel Tiger series, MACV pointed out a shortage of lucrative secondary targets and suggested that this problem could be offset somewhat by cratering roads, along selected routes, in the absence of promising alternate objectives. Road cratering, MACV said, would differ from the established choke point procedures in that the use of delayed action bombs was not intended and periodic re-strikes would be necessary. Some daytime armed recce missions, to avoid jettisoning of ordnance, had been assigned choke points as secondary targets. Alternate targets for this purpose had not yet been given night armed recce missions, although it had been suggested early in the Barrel Roll program. ^{105/}

The operations order for Steel Tiger was distributed on 31 March 1965, and basically followed the Barrel Roll plan. The operating area for the new interdiction effort was limited to portions of the Laotian Panhandle, south of Nape Pass. Operations in northern Laos would continue to be called Barrel Roll. Route 92 and Route 23 south of Route 9 in the Panhandle, and the area below Route 9 and west of Route 23 was retained by the RLAF as it had been since the Ban Tang Vai incident in January. ^{106/}

The first Steel Tiger mission was flown on 3 April 1965. Up until that time only 53 missions had been flown in the entire Barrel Roll program. In the first month of the operation, 74 Steel Tiger missions were launched. Thirty of these were armed reconnaissance; 27 missions were flown against choke points and road segments, and the remainder were attacks against such targets as military areas, installations, supply points, and bridges. Barrel Roll operations also experienced a surge

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of activity in April, with the bulk of the effort being directed at various choke points. Armed reconnaissance accounted for six of the April Barrel Roll missions. Eight missions were devoted to other fixed targets. ^{107/}

5. BR/SI Ground Rules

Approximately two months after the Steel Tiger operation began, COMUSMACV clarified and consolidated previous message traffic on Barrel Roll/Steel Tiger ground rules for operating units. One of the restrictions listed, the observance of the two-mile buffer zone, was lifted by the American Ambassador to Laos a few days later. The message spelled out the following operating procedures: ^{108/}

Barrel Roll choke point missions were authorized to conduct armed route reconnaissance and attack targets of opportunity along all approved routes in both Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger areas in addition to their primary missions. Also, Barrel Roll day reconnaissance missions could crater roads along all approved RLAF route segments in both areas--this included all choke points--to dispose of ordnance in the event weather or other operational factors prevented strikes against prebriefed targets. However, Steel Tiger mission aircraft were not allowed to penetrate Barrel Roll areas in search of targets of opportunity. Steel Tiger choke point missions could conduct armed reconnaissance or strikes against targets of opportunity along approved routes in the Steel Tiger area in lieu of primary targets also. In addition, Steel Tiger aircraft could crater approved roads and choke points within the area to dispose of

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ordnance. Both Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger aircraft, operating in the Steel Tiger restricted area, were directed to comply with strict radar flight-following and navigational assistance procedures. The rules authorized the use of Thai based aircraft for use in strikes against fleeting, transitory type targets, when requested through the Air Support Operations Center (ASOC) facility at Udorn by any Barrel Roll/Steel Tiger flight. For the first time, all bridges located within route segments authorized for road cratering could be hit, but bridges outside of these segments could not unless they were assigned as primary targets. Secondary targets could now be struck before attacking the primary. Approved areas could be used by Barrel Roll/Steel Tiger aircraft to dump ordnance. However, there were no authorized jettison areas in Laos, except approved target areas such as roads authorized to be cratered, and established choke points. If emergency required jettison in other than a target location, a "safe" site would be selected and the jettison reported as soon as possible.

6. Use of Thai Bases

The majority of the USAF Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger missions during April originated at bases in Thailand. This marked the first time that combat aircraft stationed on Thai soil had been allowed to fly combat strikes. Approval to use Thai based aircraft had been sought early in the Barrel Roll program. This approval had been considered essential before the interdiction operation could begin. As of early November 1964, Thailand based U.S. aircraft could be used over Laos for

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photo reconnaissance, armed escort for reconnaissance flights, search and rescue operations and air defense of Thailand. However, due mainly to the Thai government's reluctance to risk their status of non-belligerency by authorizing combat strikes from its bases, this approval was withheld and the first Barrel Roll missions had to be carried out by RVN or U.S. carrier based aircraft. 109/

Officials, nevertheless, continued to press for permission to fly combat sorties out of Thailand. In January 1965, Ambassador Sullivan suggested that some Barrel Roll missions could be more effectively directed if planning and coordination originated from Vientiane. General Moore at 2AD said that the Ambassador's suggestions appeared logical and that the 2AD ASOC at Udorn, Thailand, was the "ideal place" to initiate coordinated Air Force, RLAF Close Air Support (CAS) and embassy planning. According to the General, Udorn had the facilities and personnel necessary to develop joint plans which would be responsive to the Ambassador's requirements. General Moore also pointed out that, in the event the use of Thai-based U.S. aircraft were authorized in the Barrel Roll program, operational control of these forces already existed at Udorn. He called it "a natural focal point" for strike planning, coordinating and execution of missions. 110/

Despite growing interest in the use of Udorn as a command and control center for Barrel Roll missions, and the proposed use of Thai-based aircraft in the strikes, the final go-ahead of Thai operations was not given until April. Early that month, the U.S. Ambassador in Bangkok received and passed on to 2AD permission to use Thai-based USAF aircraft for Barrel Roll mission number 41D on 7 April. However, the

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first aircraft from Thailand to participate in the Barrel Roll program were four F-105's from Korat, flying air cover for a USN aircraft strike against a choke point on Route 6. Two other F-105's from Thailand were used for weather reconnaissance for the mission and two RF-101's from Udorn provided BDA. ^{111/} By the end of the year, U.S. fighter bombers staging out of four bases in Thailand were responsible for the bulk of the daily USAF combat sorties in Laos and North Vietnam.

7. Changes in Target Emphasis

Forty-eight of sixty-six Steel Tiger missions were directed against Nape Pass, Mu Gia Pass, and various route choke points during May. The remaining strikes were divided between armed recce and fixed targets. In the same month, 41 Barrel Roll missions were flown, 29 of which were choke point oriented. In June and July, with bad weather becoming a factor, the number of Steel Tiger sorties were reduced somewhat and a trend toward military areas and other such fixed targets was established. During the same period, the number of Barrel Roll missions increased considerably with more than 50 percent of them being choke point missions. ^{112/}

In September, military areas and installations felt the brunt of the interdiction effort, especially in the Panhandle. Fifty-three of eighty-one Steel Tiger missions attacked military areas. Twenty-four missions had bridges as primary targets, and ten armed reconnaissance missions were flown. For the first time since March, choke points received little attention. Only three of the September Steel Tiger missions

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were scheduled for this type of target. However, thirteen missions did have road-cutting or cratering as their primary objective. Barrel Roll mission efforts also shifted to fixed military targets, with 35 missions directed against those objectives. ^{113/}

In the last three months of 1965, Barrel Roll operations fell off sharply. Only 53 Barrel Roll missions were flown during that period, most of which struck military areas and other fixed targets. In October and November, less than 40 missions were carried out because of bad weather and restrictions placed on interdiction by the air attache in Vientiane. Steel Tiger ground to a halt in October following a temporary suspension of the operation. In late November, the Steel Tiger flights were revived, and in December, 73 missions were flown, again concentrating on military areas, installations, and supply points. Barrel Roll continued in a slump through the end of the year. ^{114/}

8. Cross Air Support (CAS)

Near the end of January 1965, CINCPACAF had asked 13AF and 2AD to consider proposals by the American Ambassador in Vientiane to extend the Barrel Roll program to include interdiction targets, then programmed for strikes by RLAF T-28's. This came shortly after the accidental destruction of eight of the latter type aircraft at Savannakhet, and a worsening of the situation in the vicinity of Sam Neua. The requested strikes were to be additional to Barrel Roll missions current at the time. CINCPACAF felt that, unless pressure was maintained in the wake of the T-28 loss, increased PL/VN activity in the vicinity of Sam Neua,

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coupled with the approaching rainy season, would result in a significant setback to U.S. and RLG efforts in Laos. ^{115/}

Early in February, CINCPAC notified JCS that he concurred with proposals put forth by the Ambassador. He also pointed out that the relative success of the then current RLAF T-28 interdiction program was due primarily to the fact that missions were flown daily and most T-28 missions were assigned secondary targets of a tactical nature as well. CINCPAC felt that similar daily coverage by U.S. aircraft would result in comparable success. ^{116/}

Meanwhile, CINCPACAF recommended a Barrel Roll strike against points on Route 12 in the Mu Gia area similar to previously recommended interdiction strikes against the Nape Highway Pass. RLAF T-28's had hit Mu Gia Pass in October 1964, with negligible results, but neither of the strategic entry points had yet been hit by U.S. aircraft. Photo analysis indicated that the DRV was making a concerted effort to construct new bridges and were making extensive roadway improvements on the approaches to these areas. As discussed earlier, increasing emphasis was placed on the establishment of choke points in these and other strategic locations. ^{117/}

In mid-February, the JCS directed CINCPAC to conduct a special Barrel Roll mission (BR-30) in Laos in support of the RLG forces in the Sam Neua area, which was fated to become the battleground for a major FAR/Neutralist offensive in the last half of the year. Target for the mission was four 105mm howitzers in fixed positions near Ban Na Sam. ^{118/}

The special BR mission, although successful, created an incident when strike aircraft accidentally hit the edge of Sam Neua town. Following

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the incident, the Ambassador abandoned the Close Air Support (CAS) idea, for the moment, in favor of the choke point program discussed previously. Although the choke point program took considerable time and effort, the Close Air Support (CAS) concept continued to be considered. In early February, the Deputy Commander, 2AD, Thailand (Dep Cdr 2AD Thai) suggested that four, two-man, Air Liaison/Forward Air Control (ALO/FAC) teams be organized. There would be one ALO/FAC man and one communications man, both jump-qualified, with each team. The deputy commander suggested that Close Air Support (CAS) be directed by a USAF ALO/FAC team in coordination with the RLC ground commander. The team would communicate directly with the strike aircraft or through an ALO/FAC aircraft to the attack force. Bases recommended for use in CAS operations were Udorn, ^{119/}Nakhon Phanom, and Ubon in Thailand.

Colonel H. L. Price, Director of Operations at 2AD, in outlining a concept of operations for CAS/interdiction in Laos, stated that the air attache officer in Laos would request the missions which would then be approved by the deputy commander. Laotian ground commanders would designate targets and the request would be forwarded to Udorn ASOC by the air attache by the fastest means available. The Udorn ASOC would be used as a Tactical Air Control Center under the command of the 2AD deputy commander. The USAF aircraft flying CAS missions would operate under some form of forward air control. Unless missions were prebriefed, aircraft would be provided by either an airborne alert or by a 5-30 minute ground alert system. All CAS mission aircraft would be provided prebriefed secondary targets to insure munitions expenditure. ^{120/}

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In April, USAF CAS missions had not yet been flown, but the military situation was deteriorating for the RLG, especially in the Sam Neua area. Shortly after the beginning of Steel Tiger operations, it had been apparent that the PL/VM were preparing for a large offensive in the Sam Neua area with the elimination of RLG military positions as their primary objective. Reports indicated many lucrative targets in the vicinity, such as enemy troop concentrations; trucks, tanks, and armored cars; artillery and AAA concentrations and numerous supply areas. This logistical buildup pointed up the likelihood of a PL/VM offensive of major importance to the military and political situation in Laos. Thirty-five targets were listed as promising in the Sam Neua area. Eleven storage points; four supply points; nine supply depots; four heavy AAA sites; two large troops concentrations; three staging areas and several strategic targets were listed. CINCPACAF recommended around-the-clock concerted air strike efforts. Napalm was suggested as a weapon of "inestimable value" for the use in the reduction of such objectives. However, the initial Steel Tiger operations order had already made provisions for the use of napalm when approved by the American embassy in Vientiane. ^{121/}

Bango/Whiplash:

Following the CAS recommendations from 2AD Thai, the air attache to Thailand pointed out the desirability of developing the capability to react immediately on intelligence provided by road watch teams in place along all major routes in northern and southern Laos. Although he

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suggested the use of T-28's for strikes, with RF-101's providing fast reaction reconnaissance, the air attache indicated that Steel Tiger aircraft could possibly be used. 2AD then proposed that four aircraft be allocated daily for strip alert duty. Controlled by the Udorn ASOC, these aircraft would scramble on request from Vientiane. In commenting on the 2AD proposal, Colonel Jack H. McCreary, Dep Cmdr 2AD Thai, said, "A quick reaction capability in response to the AIRA (Air Attache Officer), Vientiane, will create a significant advantage in the Laotian interdiction campaign and greatly assist the Laotian Air Force (AF) Commander in his effort to stop the aggressors in Laos. ^{122/}

In April, 2AD asked the Dep Cmdr at Udorn to work with Vientiane to develop a detailed concept and operating procedures for strip alert aircraft. Four F-105's would be kept on daily alert at Korat or Takhli, ^{123/} alternating airfields to allow for scheduling flexibility.

On 29 April, the Dep Cmdr 2AD Thai met with the AIRA's from Vientiane and Bangkok to work out the final agreement for use of F-105's on strip alert; however, the operation didn't begin until July. Late that month, the new system for rapid response to strike requirements began under the nickname Bango/Whiplash. Bango missions were flown by F-4C's at Ubon, and Whiplash by F-105's from Korat and Takhli. Their alert sorties were aimed at military areas, clusters of buildings, entrenchments, foxholes, troop concentrations, bridges and other ALO/VAC marked targets. The concept involved strike aircraft, as well as immediate reaction reconnaissance. First efforts were limited and difficult to sort out, in terms of effects, from normal Barrel Roll missions, but were

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praised by Ambassador Sullivan, who said the program appeared to be
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successful.

By the middle of August, Bango/Whiplash aircraft had flown more than 80 sorties, dropped some 264 750-pound bombs, and fired 1,741 rockets in CAS of RLC ground forces. Operating from a ground alert posture, these aircraft struck troop concentrations and targets marked by RLAF Forward Air Controllers (FAC). Mission results were difficult to obtain except in terms of bombs on target. BDA was obscured by heavy foliage and dust and smoke created during the attack or by ground action. 125/

Bango/Whiplash operations fluctuated somewhat during the last half of the year. In late August, operations decreased. Only 21 sorties were launched in the last two weeks. Early in September, Bango/Whiplash surged ahead when the American Ambassador called for some 65 sorties. Although the B/W missions continued to be praised by Ambassador Sullivan, the number of strikes were cut nearly half in the last half of September, and mission requests continued to decline in October with only 13 sorties flown that month. A marked increase in mission requests in November resulted in 219 sorties flown. This was indicative of increased U.S. concern with support for RLC ground forces in the face of a stronger PL/VM challenge. Bango/Whiplash missions reported destruction of numerous buildings, some bridges, and AAA sites during this period. Another recession in B/W operations was experienced in December, with only 97
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sorties flown.

Meanwhile in November, in spite of the massive efforts of the combined Barrel Roll/Steel Tiger - Bango/Whiplash effort, intelligence

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reports indicated that as much as 300 tons of supplies and large numbers of DRV regular army troops were being infiltrated into the RVN daily. PL/VM infiltration activity was apparently concentrated in the southeast portion of the Laotian Panhandle. Steel Tiger missions, although curtailed by weather and political restrictions, had been concentrating on supply storage points, truck parks, military areas, and other fixed targets in the Panhandle since September. COMUSMACV had noted that the level of effort that had been applied in the past interdiction operations had not been successful. He suggested 36 sorties per day in the Barrel Roll/Steel Tiger program as required minimum, but that this minimum figure was only half of the optimum sortie rate desired in Laos. ^{127/}

9. Tiger Hound

The storm broke over the southern Laotian Panhandle between 12-25 November 1965. USAF aircraft flew 466 sorties in that period, which was only prologue. USAF operations, normally the bulk of the effort in Laos, flew 740 sorties from 26 November to 9 December. The Navy flew 451 sorties. This sudden increase in activity announced the birth of Tiger Hound, an area within the Steel Tiger operating zone in the southern Panhandle, including parts of Saravane and Attapeu provinces. The special operating area was established late in November to counter the large buildup of PL/VM forces and the increasing concentration of Communist infiltration efforts in the southern provinces. A joint organization was established under 2AD to direct operations in the area. USAF, USMC, and USN aircraft flying combat strikes in the Tiger Hound area were guided

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to assigned targets by an airborne command and control system and U.S. Forward Air Controllers (FAC). Laos observers were assigned to FAC aircraft to reduce the time required to obtain target approval. ^{128/}

When the Tiger Hound zone was marked for special attention, changes were also made in the command and organization structure. On 10 December, 2AD was delegated coordinating authority for Barrel Roll/Steel Tiger, and the 2AD Commander was assigned complete responsibility for planning, scheduling, coordinating and execution of air operations in support of the Laos interdiction program, including Yankee Team reconnaissance and operations in the new Tiger Hound area. The 2AD Commander termed Tiger Hound "a major air campaign to restrict the flow of supplies and personnel into (the) RVN." He also said, "...the success of this campaign will materially affect the outcome of the war in Vietnam." ^{129/}

A sharp upswing in Laotian operations came in December in conjunction with the "bombing pause" over NVN. Combined U.S. interdiction sorties in Laos reached a staggering 2,932 during a two week period at the end of 1965 and the beginning of the new year. A large number of these sorties were flown in the Tiger Hound areas. The majority of forces used in the new operating zone came from RVN bases. Tiger Hound was destined to become more and more important in the early part of 1966.

10. Limiting Factors

The supply routes in Laos wound through rugged mountains, dense overhanging jungle and swamplands. In many areas, these lines of communications were completely hidden from visual aerial reconnaissance,

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and the PL/VN had the distinct advantage of a more intimate knowledge of the terrain. Skillful use of camouflage by Communist forces also added to the difficulties encountered by U.S. aircrews searching for suitable interdiction targets. Thus, the problem of target acquisition was an integral part of the Barrel Roll/Steel Tiger operation throughout the year.

Several incidents, triggered by this very problem, prompted Laos officials and the American Ambassador to place special limitations on BR/ST operations. Just four days after the first Barrel Roll mission in the new interdiction program the Ambassador in Vientiane protested. Ambassador Sullivan said that he considered two aspects of the mission disturbing. First of all, he said, he hadn't considered the Mape Bridge a target of opportunity unless enemy forces were moving on it. (Although the bridge had been attacked, there had been no damage inflicted.) The Ambassador also pointed out that it was an RLAF target and could have been hit the same day by RLAF T-28's. The second point of contention concerned 'houses' destroyed on the east approach to the bridge which, the Ambassador declared, could just as well have been civilian dwellings. Ambassador Sullivan felt that the incident indicated a need for more coordination. He said, "...either I have a serious misunderstanding of (the) rules of the game for these Barrel Roll missions or else there has been a serious failure in coordination of a type which could cause us some significant headaches...." 130/

CINCPAC concurred with the Ambassador's views, but pointed out that the buildings destroyed appeared to be a part of RLAF target Number

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25, which was a military installation. Operational commanders, nevertheless, were cautioned to confine targets of opportunity to unmistakable military activity of a transient or mobile nature. Fixed installations were to be struck only in connection with attacks on clearly identified military personnel or when prebriefed as a secondary target. MACV was to act as coordinating authority and the strike missions would be conducted by CINCPACFLT. Yankee Team procedures would be used for all future operations. ^{131/}

The problem of finding targets visually after dark was amply illustrated by the Ban Tang Vai incident. The mishap occurred during the second night mission flown on 15 Jan 65 along Route 23. The leader of a flight of three Navy A-1H aircraft and his wingman became separated from the third ship in the flight which was acting as the flare aircraft for the mission. While searching for the flare plane, the flight leader lost sight of Route 23, which was concealed in many places by overhanging jungle, and drifted approximately 10-15 miles west of Route 23. Abandoning his search, the pilot turned back toward the reconnaissance route. A few moments later he spotted a fire and the wingman dropped down to check it out. He reported what appeared to be a burning building or house, and he also said that he could see headlights of three trucks moving on a road to the northwest of the fire. The flight leader decided to attack and each plane dropped two (250 pound) bombs in the area. ^{132/}

Unfortunately the strike took place near the village of Ban Tang Vai several miles west of Route 23 and just south of Route 9 in the central Panhandle. Although actual damage to the village was slight, and

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there was evidence that high speed aircraft not associated with the Barrel Roll mission had attacked the village prior to the Navy strike, the incident caused considerable concern in both Vientiane and Washington. ^{133/}

Although General Thao Ma, Commander of the RLAF representing the Royal Laos Government (RLG), accepted apologies from American officials, he was insistent that new limitations be placed on future Barrel Roll missions, both day and night, and that targets of opportunity be restricted to vehicle and troop movements spotted on or near authorized reconnaissance routes. Future Barrel Roll operations, night or day, in the Laos Panhandle would be the exclusive preserve of the RLAF. ^{134/}

In reviewing the problem of night target acquisition following the Ban Tang Vai incident, the JCS agreed that the problem was a formidable one. However, they felt positive identification of fixed targets and reconnaissance routes in Laos could be enhanced by the use of the Udorn and Nakhon Phanom radars to position aircraft at altitude, over designated routes or targets; by the use of F-105's with Doppler navigational equipment for night missions; and by the use of TACAN stations at Da Nang, Udorn, and Korat to fix positions. ^{135/}

Another limiting factor in the early night reconnaissance program was the lack of secondary targets. None of the night missions flown between 14 Dec 64 and 1 Apr 65 were given alternate targets. Late in January, PACAF asked for comments from 13AF and 2AD regarding this problem. The JCS had suggested that secondary targets be assigned for the night flights because the odds in favor of finding a suitable target of

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opportunity by random chance were less than even, and an unnecessary hazard was created when these same aircraft had to return to base or carrier with ordnance aboard. Further, jettison of ordnance was considered wasteful, dangerous to villagers and RLG forces and imposed unwarranted operational uncertainties. ^{136/}

At a meeting in January 1965, Ambassador Sullivan stressed the need for better control and coordination of air activities over Laos. CINCPACAF hoped that the early navigational errors would induce authorities to put the control of PACAF tactical resources "back in proper channels." CINCPACAF also suggested that General Moore, at 2AD, might try to convince COMUSMACV that 2AD should "run the show" through the ASOC facility at Udorn, and get MACV to recommend that 2AD should have more positive control of both USAF and USN assets in the interdiction program. ^{137/}

CINCPACAF said, "...our ultimate objective is to get COMUSMACV completely out of air operations external to (outside of) (the) RVN. This two-pronged approach to the problem will help strengthen the primacy of control of air by a competent airman, i.e., Commander 2AD, and lay the groundwork for this control to be exercised eventually through CINCPACAF, 13AF, 2AD rather than through 2AD as (an) AFCC (Air Force Component Commander) to COMUSMACV. We are suggesting this approach because of our notable lack of success here to-date in influencing CINCPAC to alter Yankee Team and Barrel Roll procedures...." ^{138/}

Another incident in February stirred further protests from Vientiane. The American Ambassador claimed that pilots flying a special

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Barrel Roll mission (BR-30) struck the southern section of Sam Neua instead of the artillery pieces and a possible truck convoy which were the original targets. As a result, he said, the town had been ruled off limits (to further air action) by Souvanna. The Ambassador said that he would withhold approval of a second Barrel Roll mission in the area until he received clarification of BR-30, and he could be assured that flights were briefed to strike only embassy recommended targets which had been approved by Washington. ^{139/}

In May, a Steel Tiger aircraft mistakenly hit an RLG gun position near Muang Phalang, on Route 9 in the central Panhandle. Ambassador Sullivan requested the recall of Steel Tiger 200 mission aircraft and suspension of further SL-200 sorties. He stated, "...it is imperative that we take every precaution to preclude the possibility of our aircraft dropping munitions on friendly forces...." The RLAF Commander, General Ma, requested that all crews be rebriefed concerning Steel Tiger boundaries and ground rules. He directed that, unless flights were specifically ordered otherwise, aircraft overflying Laos would observe a 10,000 foot minimum altitude. General Ma also directed the aircraft to avoid overflight of major towns under the control of the RLG. ^{140/}

General Ma approved U.S. armed reconnaissance missions along Route 92 in August; however, he said that some of the local ground commanders were still "a little sensitive" about past incidents. He specifically stated, "...no mistakes (is) the order of the day...." Later that month the air attache added some new targets to the Steel Tiger armed reconnaissance program. The air attache officer stated that he

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had had trouble reselling the Steel Tiger program and promises against further mistakes to General Ma. "...we cannot over-emphasize (the) importance that all repeat all ground rules be strictly observed. Any strikes on friendly forces, areas, or villages will jeopardize (the) entire Steel Tiger program...." ^{141/}

On 1 October 1965, all Steel Tiger missions were ordered to be discontinued until further notice by the air attache in Vientiane. The ban on Steel Tiger missions also applied to Rolling Thunder flights with alternate targets in the Steel Tiger area. Barrel Roll missions in northern Laos were not affected. This stringent action followed on the heels of another unintentional strike in a RLG controlled area. A flight of Steel Tiger aircraft, due to a navigational error, strafed a fish trap and a bridge, damaging both and wounding two civilians and four soldiers. ^{142/}

Interdiction operations were curtailed sharply during October. 2AD pointed out the difficulty encountered in positively identifying targets and armed reconnaissance routes and suggested the possible use of RLAF Forward Air Controllers in future Steel Tiger operations similar to procedures established in the successful Bango/Whiplash Close Air Support (CAS) program. Early in November, the air attache in Vientiane informed CINCPAC that he was making every effort to get General Ma to remove the restrictions placed on Steel Tiger by convincing him that the weight of effort needed along Route 92 east of Saravane was beyond RLAF capability. However, he said that he hesitated to predict when Steel Tiger missions would be resumed. ^{143/}

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The restrictions placed on Steel Tiger operations were lifted later in November. On the 22nd of that month, 2AD, after recounting several minor infractions of the Steel Tiger ground rules which occurred on the previous day, directed the tactical fighter wings involved to make an immediate review of targeting for the heavy schedule for 22 November. Brig. General George P. Simler, Director of Operations for 2AD, told responsible commanders, '...Air operations in Laos are extremely sensitive. It is absolutely imperative that your aircrews do not expend munitions outside of approved areas. There have been six instances since 20 November that violated rules of engagement. Laos is being utilized as a staging base for NVN (North Vietnam) military personnel and supplies into SVN (South Vietnam). Continued violations will jeopardize U.S. authority to attack enemy forces before they can engage our ground forces. You are responsible for the conduct of your strike crews and their compliance with (the) rules of engagement. There is no excuse that is acceptable for any attack outside an approved area...." ^{144/}

The rainy season also played a part in curtailing interdiction operations. Weather began to effect BR/ST missions in July as the rainy season neared its peak. Ten percent of the Barrel Roll and eight percent of the Steel Tiger missions were cancelled for weather in the first half of the month. The figure rose to 22 percent of BR and 44 percent for ST in the last half of July. Several missions which were launched were unable to hit their targets because of weather. In the last two weeks in August, 68 percent of the ST missions were scrubbed,

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bringing the ST/BR operation to its lowest ebb since the combined operation's initial surge in April. As the rainy season waned, Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger operations climbed slowly toward their normal levels. ^{145/}

11. Restraints and Restrictions

"...they (restrictions) change almost weekly. New restrictions are imposed; others are lifted. We are engaged in a constant discussion with CINCPAC and (the) Joint Chiefs of Staff trying to get these things changed and it is amazing to me that General Moore and his people are able to fight the war as effectively as they do working under the rules and restrictions that apply...." (Major General John W. Vogt, PACAF Director of Plans and Operations, PACAF Commander's Conference, November 1965)

Several restrictions were placed on early Barrel Roll missions which no doubt served to offset the effectiveness of the program somewhat. Early missions were limited to small numbers of strike aircraft and were sparsely spaced. A period of 72 hours was initially required between armed reconnaissance missions (it was later reduced to 48 hours), and the use of napalm as a weapon was prohibited, although there were advocates for its use. Overflight of the DRV was not permitted and a two mile buffer zone was established along the Laos/North Vietnam border. In February, MACV recommended that all such restraints, as the required buffer zone, be closely monitored since they created unnecessary restrictions for the tactical commander responsible for mission accomplishment. ^{146/}

The sterile interval required between mission in the early months, although reduced from 72 hours to 48 hours, resulted in mission delays and

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created scheduling problems. The requirement that the JCS give final approval of all Barrel Roll missions also limited the scope of the early Barrel Roll program. Fleeting or mobile targets, pinpointed by such intelligence sources as FAR and Meo forces, road watch teams and Air America pilots, had to be left to the RLAF T-28's in the first half of 1965 until the establishment of Bango/Whiplash discussed above. ^{147/}

A lack of low level photo reconnaissance photography over Laos was another example of early restrictions effecting air operations. CINCPAC considered low level oblique and vertical photography essential in locating and confirming dispersed and concealed targets. He recommended low level reconnaissance by Yankee Team aircraft to obtain the required intelligence. Reflights by ST/BR mission aircraft, merely to obtain BDA, also had to be approved by higher authority. MACV felt that the three-day waiting period for approval of reflights gave the enemy ample time to remove the evidence, especially where mobile targets were concerned. MACV wanted provisions made in the original operations order to allow reflights to obtain BDA without the necessity for obtaining further approval. ^{148/}

By mid-1965, many of the restraints and restrictions placed on Barrel Roll had been gradually removed or modified to provide for daily missions; larger numbers of aircraft assigned to individual targets; the use of napalm when approved by the American Ambassador to Laos; removal of the two-mile buffer zone; low level photography and more flexible target assignments. However, many old limitations were replaced with new ones, and political restraints were a never-ending problem in the Laos

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interdiction operation.

12. Effectiveness of Laos Interdiction

Armed reconnaissance was particularly disappointing to many officials. While the harassing tactics of day and night reconnaissance caused some damage (and a possible slowdown in traffic flow), the DRV continued to move men and material into Laos. By increasing their efforts, using night movement, concealment and effective camouflage, the Pathet Laos had been able to keep the supply lines open with no appreciable reduction in the flow. Absolute stoppage of this supply movement was conceded to be virtually impossible, but officials hoped that movement of logistical supplies could be made costly and reduced to a point where the effectiveness of the enemy's combat units would be substantially degraded, if not crippled. ^{150/}

The sparsely-spaced strike missions in the early days of the Barrel Roll operation scarcely lived up to expectations. The armed reconnaissance missions had sighted only a trickle of vehicular traffic and many of the secondary targets assigned to daytime missions had already been destroyed by RLAF T-28's or had been dismantled and abandoned by the Communists prior to the interdiction strikes. When strikes were successful, they failed to stem the flow of traffic, although the results were costly to the Pathet Laos. The special strike on the Ban Kan Bridge was one of the first "successes" in the program. The prized bridge, believed impossible to bypass, was completely destroyed in January. However, two aircraft were lost in the raid. Intelligence

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reports indicated that a dam above the bridge had been pressed into use and the flow of traffic along strategic Route 7 continued unabated. Barrel Roll 30, the armed reconnaissance mission along Route 6, which had been assigned special targets in the Sam Neua areas, was one of the first successful armed reconnaissance strikes, leaving behind ten or more trucks destroyed and several strong points left burning. Yet, the success of the mission was marred when aircraft struck the southern section of Sam Neua Town resulting in considerable consternation, both in Vientiane and Washington. 151/

Initial operations reports (Ops-4 Reports) showed that the first 53 Barrel Roll missions accounted for approximately 27 buildings destroyed. Fifty more were reported to have been damaged in varying degrees or left burning. Twenty-six trucks were destroyed, one severely damaged, and three went untouched. Five secondary explosions were also reported. Choke point missions were successful in that roads were effectively cut, cratered or reseeded and landslides were produced, but PL/VN forces were reportedly able to bypass the established choke points or were successful in finding alternate supply routes. 152/

Although interdiction missions were flown on a daily basis, with the beginning of Steel Tiger, and the weight of effort increased accordingly, individual missions produced little more in the way of tangible results than earlier interdiction strikes. Early in May, a study of Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger missions in southern Laos revealed that, although these interdiction efforts had impeded enemy movements, they had not cut the Communist lifeline, especially along Routes 12 and 23 in the Panhandle.

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There was an initial decline of movement in March, followed by a steady increase in traffic flow during the next three months to the highest levels yet observed. Intelligence sources continued to report that, although choke point missions were successful, these areas could be and were being bypassed. There appeared to be no significant delay in traffic resulting from the choke point program. ^{153/}

There was a reported buildup of anti-aircraft capability during the rainy season, which indicated a (PL/VM Plan) to start moving supplies through the passes again as the roads dried out and became passible during the last half of September. Another increase in the movement of supplies and personnel appeared to reflect the growing concern of the Communists with their activities in Laos, and with the use of the infiltration routes into the RVN. PL/VM forces still exerted pressure in the west central Panhandle in spite of RLC efforts to dislodge them. PL/VM forces in the southern Panhandle provinces of Saravane and Attapeu were estimated to be about five to eight battalions, including units of the 304th PAVN Division. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reports, at the end of September, showed that Communist troops were still walking south in the Panhandle. According to this report about 2,500 troops had transited Mu Gia Pass during the preceding three months. Half of these personnel, who were said to be mostly North Vietnamese, were in company and battalion size groups. At least 3,800 Pathet Laos and North Vietnamese, in similar groupings, were also observed moving south on Route 23. The presence of troop concentrations indicated that an effective bypass of Mu Gia Pass choke point had been established. Increased traffic noted

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throughout the last half of the year in the southeastern Panhandle had become more important to the Communists in connection with infiltration into the highlands of South Vietnam. ^{154/}

Officials argued that the failure of armed reconnaissance flights to sight vehicular traffic alone was not indicative of the overall worth of the armed reconnaissance operation. They insisted that the lack of sightings could well indicate that the interdiction effort had forced the PL/VN to restrict the use of main supply routes and had forced them to use inferior roads, as well as the use of man and animals to pack supplies over remote trails. For this reason, the continued use of armed reconnaissance at a reasonable frequency and at irregular intervals around-the-clock was recommended. ^{155/}

On a trip to Washington in August, Ambassador Sullivan was told by Secretary of Defense McNamara and Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, CINCPAC, that they felt some interdiction sorties in Laos were being launched merely to meet sortie rate commitments, and that some of these sorties were unprofitable. ^{156/}

Although evidence indicated that air interdiction failed to halt or significantly stem the flow of PL/VN personnel and material, it did have an erosive effect on Pathet Laos morale. There could be no doubt that supply and resupply in Laos was a costly business which created an economic liability both in Laos and in the DRV. Perhaps the most concrete evidence in favor of the U.S. interdiction operation was the fact that the war in Laos had developed into a night war with most PL/VN attacks occurring after dark. Virtually all vehicular traffic moved

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during the hours of darkness. Most significant, the PL/VN were forced to turn to clandestine air resupply, also at night, in an area where U.S. air superiority could not be adequately challenged. ^{157/}

During the annual PACAF commander's conference, in November, Colonel D. C. Shultis, PACAF Director of Intelligence, said of the air interdiction program, "... (it) has eroded Pathet Laos morale. They suffer shortages of food and supplies in all areas of Laos, and increasing numbers of Pathet Laos have defected. A big fact is that the Communists have not launched and maintained a single major offensive in Laos since our last meeting, but they (the Pathet Laos) continued to hold the Ho Chi Minh Trail...." The Colonel also predicted that infiltration into the RVN would continue to grow and the Viet Cong, supported by large numbers of infiltrated PAVN units, could continue to exert pressure in South Vietnam...." Perhaps the most telling commentary on air interdiction effectiveness came during the operations briefing at the PACAF commander's conference. While generally praising activity and results in the DRV and RVN, little mention was given the Laotian effort. Concerning this important subject, Brig. General Joseph J. Krusel, PACAF Director of Operations, merely said, "...in Laos, strikes against fixed targets and armed reconnaissance of LOC's (lines of communications) are intended to harass, restrict, and disrupt movements of personnel and material destined for Pathet Laos and Viet Minh forces, or further infiltration into South Vietnam...." ^{158/}

Late in November, 2AD summarized the economic impact that U.S. interdiction strikes had had on the DRV. The cost of permanent reconstruction

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of rail and highway bridges, and the replacement and repair of transportation equipment would cost an estimated twelve million dollars. The estimated cost of temporary bridge construction, alone, would be one million dollars. 2AD concluded, "...the limited objective of impeding supplier has been partially accomplished because supplies are piling up on the wharves and streets of Haiphong. Unconfirmed reports indicate that the DRV is even considering using Hainan Island for storage. Because Haiphong is presently off limits for bombings, these supplies will eventually reach their destinations...." ^{159/}

The following charts provide a summarized assessment of the physical damage inflicted on each RLAF numbered target for all Barrel Roll/Steel Tiger missions in Laos from 14 December 1964 to 6 January 1966.

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1 RLAF NUMBERED TARGET SYSTEM SUMMARY

C. TOTAL BR/SL AREAS

AS OF 6

TARGET SYSTEM	TOTAL	PRIORITY C	TOTAL CONSID- ERED	NOT DAMAGED	DAMAGED			
					UNK AMOUNT	0-30%	30%-60%	60%-90%
MIL AREAS W/BLDGS	267	20	267	67	22	15	24	41
MIL AREAS W/O BLDGS	131	3	128	72	44	1		0
BRIDGES	42	3	39	16	6			1
AIRFIELDS	3		3	3	0			
RADAR/COMM SITES	2		2	0	1			
STRONGPOINTS	17	2	15	6	3	1		
FORDS	9		9	4	4		1	1
FERRIES	5		5	2	1	1		
AAA SITES	2		2	0	0			
TOTAL	498	28	470	170	81	18	25	43

Above covers 186 Numbered RLAF Targets containing 498 sub areas.
Priority "C" targets cannot be struck due to proximity to friendly troops, political reasons.
Military Areas with Buildings - Barracks, admin, covered supply, etc.
Military Areas without Buildings - Truck parks, open storage, caves, bivouac areas, etc.

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1. RLAF NUMBERED TARGET SYSTEM SUMMARY

C. TOTAL BR/SL AREAS

AS OF 6 Jan 66

TARGET SYSTEM	TOTAL	PRIORITY C	TOTAL CONSID- ERED	NOT DAMAGED	DAMAGED				DES- TROYED	PERCENT DAMAGED
					UNK AMOUNT	0-30%	30%-60%	60%-90%		
AREAS W/BLDGS	287	20	267	67	22	15	24	41	98	74.8
AREAS W/O BLDGS	131	3	128	72	44	1		0	11	43.7
IS	42	3	39	16	6			1	16	59.0
ILDS	3		3	3	0				0	0.0
COMM SITES	2		2	0	1				1	100.0
POINTS	17	2	15	6	3	1			4	60.0
	9		9	4	4		1	1	0	55.6
S	5		5	2	1	1			1	60.0
TES	2		2	0	0				2	100.0
TOTAL	498	28	470	170	81	18	25	43	133	63.8

Covers 186 Numbered RLAF Targets containing 498 sub areas.

"C" targets cannot be struck due to proximity to friendly troops, political reasons, etc.

Areas with Buildings - Barracks, admin, covered supply, etc.

Areas without Buildings - Truck parks, open storage, caves, bivouac areas, etc.

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1. RLAF NUMBERED TARGET SYSTEM SUMMARY

A. BARREL ROLL AREA

AS OF 6 Jan

TARGET SYSTEM	TOTAL	PRIORITY C	TOTAL CONSID- ERED	NOT DAMAGED	DAMAGED				DES TROY
					UNK AMOUNT	0-30%	30%-60%	60%-90%	
MIL AREAS W/BLDGS	142	13	129	27	8	9	12	18	55
MIL AREAS W/O BLDGS	58	3	55	35	13	1	0	0	6
BRIDGES	15	0	15	9	0	0	0	0	6
AIRFIELDS	3		3	3					
RADAR/COMM SITES	1		1						1
STRONGPOINTS	11	2	9	4	2	1	0	1	1
FORDS	2		2	2					
FERRIES	1		1						1
AAA SITES	0		0						
TOTAL	233	18	215	80	23	11	12	19	70

Above covers 69 Numbered RLAF Targets containing 233 sub areas.

Priority "C" targets cannot be struck due to proximity to friendly troops, political reasons, Military Areas with Buildings - Barracks, admin, covered supply, etc.

Military Areas without Buildings - Trucks parks, open storage, caves, bivouac areas, etc.

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1. RLAF NUMBERED TARGET SYSTEM SUMMARY

A. BARREL ROLL AREA

AS OF 6 Jan 66

SYSTEM	TOTAL	PRIORITY C	TOTAL CONSID- ERED	NOT DAMAGED	DAMAGED				DES- TROYED	PERCENT DAMAGED
					UNK AMOUNT	0-30%	30%-60%	60%-90%		
W/BLDGS	142	13	129	27	8	9	12	18	55	79.0
W/O BLDGS	58	3	55	35	13	1	0	0	6	36.4
	15	0	15	9	0	0	0	0	6	40.0
	3		3	3						0.0
M SITES	1		1						1	100.0
ENTS	11	2	9	4	2	1	0	1	1	55.6
	2		2	2						0.0
	1		1						1	0.0
	0		0							---
	233	18	215	80	23	11	12	19	70	62.8

rs 69 Numbered RLAF Targets containing 233 sub areas.

"C" targets cannot be struck due to proximity to friendly troops, political reasons, etc.

reas with Buildings - Barracks, admin, covered supply, etc.

reas without Buildings - Trucks parks, open storage, caves, bivouac areas, etc.

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1. RLAF NUMBERED TARGET SYSTEM SUMMARY

B. STEEL TIGER AREA

AS OF 6 Jan

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TARGET SYSTEM	TOTAL	PRIORITY C	TOTAL CONSID- ERED	NOT DAMAGED	DAMAGED				DES TROY
					UNK AMOUNT	0-30%	30%-60%	60%-90%	
MIL AREAS W/BLDGS	145	7	138	40	14	6	12	23	43
MIL AREAS W/O BLDGS	73	0	73	37	31	0	0	0	5
BRIDGES	27	3	24	7	6	0	0	1	10
AIRFIELDS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
RADAR/COMM SITES	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
STRONGPOINTS	6	0	6	2	1	0	0	0	3
FORDS	7	0	7	2	4	0	1	0	0
FERRIES	4	0	4	2	1	1	0	0	0
AAA SITES	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	265	10	255	90	58	7	13	24	63

Above covers 117 Numbered RLAF Targets containing 265 sub areas.

Priority "C" targets cannot be struck due to proximity to friendly troops, political reasons, Military Areas with Buildings - Barracks, admin, covered supply, etc.

Military Areas without Buildings - Truck parks, open storage, caves, bivouac areas, etc.

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1. RLAF NUMBERED TARGET SYSTEM SUMMARY

B. STEEL TIGER AREA

AS OF 6 Jan 66

TARGET SYSTEM	TOTAL	PRIORITY C	TOTAL CONSID- ERED	NOT DAMAGED	DAMAGED				DES- TROYED	PERCENT DAMAGED
					UNK AMOUNT	0-30%	30%-60%	60%-90%		
AS W/BLDGS	145	7	138	40	14	6	12	23	43	71.0
AS W/O BLDGS	73	0	73	37	31	0	0	0	5	49.3
	27	3	24	7	6	0	0	1	10	70.8
DS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	---
COMM SITES	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	100.0
POINTS	6	0	6	2	1	0	0	0	3	66.7
	7	0	7	2	4	0	1	0	0	71.3
S	4	0	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	50.0
TES	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	100.0
TOTAL	265	10	255	90	58	7	13	24	63	64.8

Covers 117 Numbered RLAF Targets containing 265 sub areas.

by "C" targets cannot be struck due to proximity to friendly troops, political reasons, etc.

by Areas with Buildings - Barracks, admin, covered supply, etc.

by Areas without Buildings - Truck parks, open storage, caves, bivouac areas, etc.

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5. STATUS OF BUILDINGS IN NUMBERED RLAF
PRIORITIES A AND B TARGET AREAS

AS OF 6 Jan 66

STATUS	NUMBER OF BUILDINGS			PERCENT OF TOTAL
	BARREL ROLL AREA	STEEL TIGER AREA	TOTAL	
TOTAL NUMBER OF BUILDINGS	1544	1348	2892	100.0%
NUMBER OF BUILDINGS UNDAMAGED	411	582	993	34.3%
NUMBER WITH SLIGHT/LIGHT DAMAGE	17	22	39	1.3%
NUMBER WITH MODERATE DAMAGE	36	78	114	3.9%
NUMBER WITH SEVERE/HEAVY DAMAGE	63	36	99	3.5%
NUMBER OF BUILDINGS DISMANTLED	105	30	135	4.7%
NUMBER OF BUILDINGS DESTROYED	912	600	1512	52.3%

ITEM	BARREL ROLL AREA	STEEL TIGER AREA	TOTAL
NUMBER OF A AND B PRIORITY NUMBERED TARGETS	75	114	189
NUMBER OF A AND B PRIORITY SUB AREAS	226	258	484
NUMBER OF PRIORITY A AND B TARGET SUB AREAS WHICH CONTAIN BUILDINGS	129	129	258

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4. ARMED RECON RESULTS

AS OF 6 Jan 66

TYPE INSTALLATION ATTACKED	NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES									
	TOTAL	ALPHA Area	BRAVO Area	CHARLIE Area	TOTAL B/R Area	DELTA Area	ECHO Area	FOX- TROT Area	TOTAL SL Area	OTHER Areas
ROAD SEGMENTS										
Road cratered	314		23	25	48	164	78	11	253	13
Results unknown	118		4	5	9	76	26	5	107	2
Missed	2					2			2	
BRIDGES										
Destroyed	30		3	1	4	16	7	3	26	
Damaged	22		4	1	5	8	5	4	17	
Approaches cratered	38		9	1	10	19	8		27	1
Results unknown	18		2	1	3	10	3		13	2
Missed	1						1		1	
TRUCKS										
Destroyed	33					20	8	5	33	
Damaged	41					32	8	1	41	
Results unknown	53					44	9		53	
Missed	1						1		1	
FORDS										
Cratered	8			1	1	6	1		7	
Approaches cratered	3					2		1	3	
Damaged	1						1		1	
TRUCK PARKS										
Results unknown	31		1	4	5	18	7	1	26	
Damage to area	75					67	8		75	
BUILDINGS										
Destroyed/Damaged	217		33		33	20	103	20	143	41
*TROOP CONCENTRATIONS	66		5	6	11	6	8	4	18	37
*AAA	50		1	9	10	7	11	6	24	16
*BUNKERS	9			2	2			1	1	6

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4. ARMED RECON RESULTS (Continued)

SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS	59		4	3	7	16	17	8	41	11
*MILITARY AREAS	32		3	3	6	9	9	4	22	4
*STORAGE AREAS	48		4		4	11	12	16	39	5
*AIRFIELDS Cratered	1		1		1					
*TRAIL	1		1		1					
*FLOATING BARGES	1					1			1	
*FOOT BRIDGES	2							2	2	
*DAMS	2							2	2	
*VILLAGES	1									1
*FERRY CROSSINGS	3						3		3	

*Damaged/Destroyed

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E. RECONNAISSANCE

1. Introduction

The first USAF reconnaissance program established in Thailand was given the nickname, "Yankee Team." Its purpose was to conduct photo reconnaissance in Laos. Later, reconnaissance responsibilities would include sorties into Vietnam in support of "Rolling Thunder" and "Blue Tree" missions. The latter was pre-strike photo reconnaissance, of major transportation lines, supply routes, and other targets in North Vietnam. Yankee Team missions and those in support of Rolling Thunder consumed the greatest number of sorties. Since Rolling Thunder has been covered in previous installments of 2AD histories, this discussion concerns itself largely with the Yankee Team effort. ^{160/}

2. Yankee Team

On 18 May 1964, the first Yankee Team photo reconnaissance missions over Laos were approved when PL/PAVN forces attacked Neutralist forces and pushed them off the Plaine des Jarres. On that date, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) authorized the first missions and they were flown by Navy aircraft from Carrier Task Group (CTG) 77.4. The following day a Reconnaissance Task Force (RTF) at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, flew the first Air Force missions. The RTF, nicknamed Able Mable, was already positioned at Tan Son Nhut and had been flying in-country missions prior to the Yankee Team sorties. ^{161/}

On 20 May, the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) recommended that a continuing program of low level reconnaissance be initiated

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with two daylight and one night mission weekly. Two days later the JCS assigned the nickname, "Yankee Team", to the program, and on the 25th, they authorized a continuous program in Laos. The Able Mable RTF at Tan Son Nhut flew all Yankee Team missions until April 1965. It should be noted, however, that intermittent flights originated from Thai bases ^{162/} during that period.

a. The Move to Thailand:

In September 1964, 2AD proposed to the Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV) that four to six RF-101's be moved either to Don Muang or Udorn, Thailand. The move was aimed at improving USAF's low level Yankee Team operations north of 20 degrees in Laos. RF-101's flying unescorted low-level sorties from Udorn, 2AD said, could operate, without refueling, over all northern Laos up to the Communist Chinese (CHICOM) border. Escort, if needed, could be provided by F-105's from Korat or F-100's from Takhli. Those aircraft, without refueling, could operate as far north as 21 degrees. Air refueling the escort aircraft would extend their range to the CHICOM border. Operations from Don Muang would permit unrefueled sorties up to 21 degrees north. By operating from Thailand, said 2AD, Yankee Team would gain flexibility in choice of routes, bases, and forces employed. ^{163/}

In January 1965, the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Air Forces (CINCPACAF) alerted 5th and 13th Air Forces to prepare for a realignment of reconnaissance in Southeast Asia. The realignment called for the 45th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron to deploy an RTF to Tan Son Nhut to

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continue the Able Mable operation. The 15th TRS was to send an RTP to Don Muang Air Base, Thailand to conduct Yankee Team operations from there. The Thailand operation was to be equipped with six RF-101's.

The 45th at Tan Son Nhut was to fly Yankee Team missions, as well as Barrel Roll, and any other reconnaissance missions that could more easily be accomplished from Vietnam. The 15th was designated to perform only Yankee Team missions, but it would later fly additional reconnaissance missions in support of other operations. For identification purposes, the Vietnam unit was to be known as Able Mable (Alpha), and the one at Don Muang as Able Mable (Bravo).^{164/}

While the U.S. already had permission of the Thai government to conduct reconnaissance from that country's bases, it would need separate approval to bring a unit into the country. The U.S. Air Attache in Bangkok believed the Thai government would consider the RTP a unit regardless of the identity given it by the USAF. He also said it was impossible to accommodate the operation on short notice because there was not enough space to park all of the aircraft; water was not available to meet the requirements of the photo processing cell; and on-base billeting could not house all of the personnel. It would be "a long term process, if ever," said the AIRA, to negotiate arrangements to position the RTP at Don Muang. He concluded by saying it was possible to arrange for the use of Takhlí, Udorn, or Ubon, but even there he would need time to negotiate with the Royal Thai government.^{165/}

After hearing the Air Attache's reasons for opposing Don Muang, 13AF decided in favor of Udorn. The base had adequate water and disposal

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facilities and new construction had eased a shortage of on-base quarters. The numbered Air Force said Udorn appeared to offer advantages not to be had at Don Muang. Among them, said 13AF, was a faster response to the requirements of the Ambassador to Laos; less support personnel required because of shorter sortie time; and the added mission flexibility 2AD sought. 13AF's estimate for the RTF was four aircraft and a total complement of approximately 80 personnel. ^{166/}

Late in January, Fifth Air Force, which controlled the 15th TRS, asked for a schedule of suggested dates and any special support requirements in connection with the move to Thailand. Fifth Air Force would, in turn, direct the move of the RTF to Udorn and the withdrawal of 15th TRS assets no longer needed at Tan Son Nhut. ^{167/}

Closely following 5AF's request came a warning from CINCPACAF to both 5th and 13th Air Forces not to proceed in haste. They must first coordinate their plans with the various Yankee Team controlling agencies. COMUSMACV and Graham Martin, the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, had to review the proposed action. Furthermore, no changes could be brought in Southeast Asia force structures without the approval of CINCPAC. ^{168/}

Ambassador Martin offered no objections to the move, and the American Embassy in Laos saw "great merit" in the idea of moving sub-control of Air Force Yankee Team missions from Vietnam to Udorn. It would relieve congestion at Da Nang Air Base, Vietnam, and at the same time make more efficient use of a newly installed operational capability at Udorn. COMUSMACV also agreed to the move, but with the provision that he retain operational command of Yankee Team assets. With all agencies in agreement,

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the RTF moved into Udorn on 1 April 1965, and immediately took over the major share of Yankee Team missions. A month later, the Thai government gave its permission for the U.S. to station 12 RF-101's at Udorn. ^{169/}

b. Control of Yankee Team:

Prior to April 1965, execution authority and approval of individual Yankee Team missions came from Washington. The President and Secretary of Defense were constantly briefed on Yankee Team operations. The JCS was the "approving authority" but actually reflected the views of the executive branch. Next in the chain of command was the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC). On 6 April, CINCPACAF recommended to the JCS that he be made the approving authority for Yankee Team. Four days later COMUSMACV asked for the same power. The Air Force favored the COMUSMACV proposal on the assumption that the 2AD Commander would be COMUSMACV's deputy for the conduct of Yankee Team. But the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT) was against authority being given to any agency lower than CINCPAC. The Navy Commander's argument was that CINCPAC controlled the resources of both CINCPACFLT (Navy) and CINCPACAF (Air Force) and, therefore, should determine priorities, and coordinate all missions in Southeast Asia. The controversy was settled in April when CINCPAC said that he was the controlling agency for Yankee Team operations. COMUSMACV was designated as his coordinating authority. In that position, COMUSMACV was given the power to delay, cancel, or reschedule Yankee Team missions if unexpected reasons developed. This position was reiterated in September ^{170/} when CINCPAC said he retained overall control of the operation.

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When Yankee Team was established in May 1964 as a continuing operation, its objectives, which remained unchanged through 1965, were to:

- (1) Provide tactical intelligence to friendly forces in Laos in the conduct of current operations.
- (2) Determine, if possible, the extent and scope of war material, troops, and resources being moved from the DRV (North Vietnam) via Laos into the RVN (South Vietnam).
- (3) Provide a psychological "shot in the arm" to the Laos, Thai, and other friendly forces in Southeast Asia.
- (4) Demonstrate openly to the Communists the interest and determination to stay in SEA.

In fulfilling these objectives, Yankee Team missions were flown under rules of engagement that imposed many restraints, some of which made it difficult to conduct an effective program. ^{171/}

c. Rules of Engagement:

CINCPACAF outlined the JCS rules of engagement for reconnaissance missions in July 1964. Essentially, the rules spelled out flight altitudes for various conditions; when retaliatory and suppressive fire was allowed; and when escort fighters would be provided. Generally, the missions were to be flown at medium level which was described as an altitude above the level of expected hostile ground fire. Low level flights would be authorized only if medium altitudes would not produce satisfactory results. Further, the low level flights, if against areas with strong anti-aircraft defenses, would be approved on a "case by case basis" and only if the priority of requirements justified the risks. ^{172/}

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(1) Altitude Restrictions:

When the JCS originally defined medium altitude as being above the effective range of ground fire for small arms and most automatic weapons, the minimum was set at 3,000 feet above ground level (AGL). In November 1964, an F-100 Yankee Team aircraft on a retaliatory mission was shot down and a day later, an RF-101 was downed. The latter had flown part of the mission at 15,000 feet and the remainder at 3,000 feet to get under a cloud layer. It was shot down while at the lower altitude. Following the losses, the JCS redefined the medium altitude for Yankee Team as 10,000 feet AGL with the result being less effective photo coverage. Strike aircraft could go below ceilings of 1,000 feet, and even less, to hit targets. But Yankee Team aircraft following the strike to obtain battle damage assessment (BDA) photos might well find cloud cover below their 10,000 foot altitude, making photography impossible. ^{173/}

The Air Force wanted greater freedom to schedule low-level flights as required. CINCPACAF recommended the removal of restrictions to permit such flights. Although CINCPAC agreed with CINCPACAF about the need for low-level missions, he did not feel the time was right to ask for full authority to fly them. He believed overall authority could be won in time, but not until authorities at higher levels were convinced of the advantage of low-level reconnaissance. Until then, permission to fly at low-level would have to be obtained individually for each mission. CINCPACAF was assured that his requests for such missions would be sent to the JCS with CINCPAC's recommendation for approval.

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CINCPAC added that he would continue to seek more voice in the control of ^{174/} low-level reconnaissance.

While CINCPAC did indeed support requests for low-level reconnaissance missions, the results were disappointing. Of 17 missions requested in January 1965, only one was approved. Four others were permitted partial coverage at low-level. Lacking knowledge of the reasons for denial of permission for the low-level flights, CINCPAC assumed that the "approving authority" considered the missions as high risk. If this were true, the reasoning was not in agreement with the original requests which, in every case, had assessed the missions as either low or medium risk. ^{175/}

The assessments were made by COMUSMACV and concurred in by CINCPAC. Since neither had considered any of the missions as high risk, it appeared that the approving authority was assuming all low-level missions to be high risk if they so much as flew over an anti-aircraft installation. It seemed certain that the low-level flights were being denied by an authority above the JCS since the latter notified CINCPAC that "some difficulty is being experienced in obtaining approval for so-called high-risk missions." In an effort to win approval for the missions, the JCS asked CINCPAC to provide a detailed evaluation of risks, and "extensive justification for each low-level flight." ^{176/}

CINCPAC responded to the JCS request with a strong case in favor of low-level missions. He argued that low-level coverage was urgently needed to keep an eye on the degree of the reported Communist buildup throughout Laos, as well as to locate new targets for Barrel Roll

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strikes. Worthwhile targets, said CINCPAC, had become very scarce. ^{177/}

CINCPAC's announcement in April that he was the controlling agency for Yankee Team operations also revealed that he had been granted authority to approve either medium or low-level missions. To provide flexibility to meet changing requirements, CINCPAC authorized COMUSMACV to deviate from approved force composition, tactics, and specified missions. ^{178/} Deviations made by COMUSMACV could be carried out without CINCPAC approval.

(2) Photography on Weather Reconnaissance Missions:

In the early days of Yankee Team, the JCS had authorized weather reconnaissance sorties to be flown in advance of photo missions. In August 1964, CINCPAC said that while photo missions required approval from "high levels in Washington," launch authority for weather aircraft in support of Yankee Team had been delegated and did not require approval. But CINCPAC also said that the practice of using RF-101's on weather reconnaissance and permitting the same sorties to photograph "targets of opportunity" had raised questions in Washington. The taking of photos was the function of a photo reconnaissance mission, and as such required approval. CINCPAC informed COMUSMACV, 2AD and CINCPACAF that they had authority to fly weather reconnaissance flights, but added that photography would not be conducted on those missions. ^{179/}

Second Air Division said such a restriction did not permit the best use of its aircraft assets. The division added that the JCS were unaware of the restrictions and thought it might not be in line with their thinking. In late January, it told 13AF it had met with failure in past

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efforts to get approval from MACV and other agencies up the line of authority. The division asked 13AF to seek permission to photograph targets of opportunity during Yankee Team weather missions. In September, CINCPAC notified COMUSMACV that the rule barring photography had been waived and photos could be taken. ^{180/}

(3) Suppressive Fire Restraint:

The JCS rules of engagement of July 1964 permitted retaliatory fire for medium altitude flights if either the reconnaissance aircraft or its escort was threatened by ground fire. On low-level missions, retaliatory fire could be employed if the reconnaissance or escort aircraft were fired upon. But suppressive fire (hitting enemy anti-aircraft positions in advance of the reconnaissance aircraft) required JCS approval. Authorization could be requested for low-level missions against areas with strong anti-aircraft defenses. In such cases, the reconnaissance missions would be escorted and the escorts could, with JCS approval, attack anti-aircraft positions before the reconnaissance aircraft arrived. ^{181/}

Both CINCPACAF and CINCPACFLT felt they should have more freedom to use suppressive fire. CINCPACAF proposed a combination of counter-battery and pre-planned interdiction strikes to be employed against the enemy's anti-aircraft batteries. CINCPACFLT pointed out that, although not totally effective, suppressive fire would keep gun crews from firing with impunity. ^{182/}

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In April 1965, it still took JCS approval to use suppressive fire during Yankee Team missions, and the Air Force continued to press for freedom to apply it ahead of reconnaissance flights into heavily defended areas. ^{183/} By September, the policy had changed only to the extent that approval came from the U.S. Ambassador in Vientiane and ^{184/} CINCPAC.

d. Expansion of Reconnaissance in Thailand:

On 2 April, one day after arrival of the RF-101's at Udorn, the JCS authorized their use in a reconnaissance program nicknamed, "Blue Tree." The new program called for missions over North Vietnam south of the 21st parallel to obtain pre-strike photography for updating target coverage, as well as to photograph other areas for future targeting. From the outset, unlike Yankee Team, Blue Tree was conducted relatively free of restraints. CINCPAC was given freedom to execute Blue Tree missions at his own discretion and they could be flown at low-level. The only restrictions were that the missions be limited to ten per week (two aircraft on each mission) and the planes could not venture inside of a ^{185/} forty nautical mile radius of Hanoi and Haiphong.

Meanwhile, the Udorn based RF-101's flew their first three reconnaissance missions in support of Rolling Thunder on 19 April. Rolling Thunder missions were also over North Vietnam. Although the three missions were the only ones flown in support of Rolling Thunder during April, the next three months brought an increasing number of sorties and, by August, that operation was consuming a major portion of

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reconnaissance sorties flown from Udorn. With the 15th RTF now flying reconnaissance under three separate programs, the number of aircraft was increased to twelve on 3 May. ^{186/}

August added still another specialized type of mission to the unit's commitments when its aircraft began flying reconnaissance over North Vietnam's SA-2 SAM sites to gather pre-strike photos as well as post-strike (BDA) pictures. Missions for this purpose bore the nickname, "Iron Hand".

The addition of Blue Tree, followed by Rolling Thunder, resulted in an almost threefold increase in reconnaissance sorties in May, with 110 in April and 301 in May. Another 260 were flown in June. (The figures represent total sorties in support of all operations.) A breakout of the number of sorties for each program was available for the last half of the year and is shown in Table 5. The column headed "Other" accounts for miscellaneous sorties such as reconnaissance accomplished in Thailand at the request of the Thai government, and photography of U.S. installations in Thailand. ^{187/}

TABLE 5

RECONNAISSANCE SORTIES

	<u>Rolling Thunder</u>	<u>Yankee Team</u>	<u>Blue Tree</u>	<u>Iron Hand</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Jul	72	113	30		144	359
Aug	118	91	32	32	96	369
Sep	168	121	30	26	58	403
Oct	174	91	46	66	44	421
Nov	143	71	36	82	41	373
Dec	124	97	28	16	50	315
TOTAL	799	584	202	222	433	2240

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In addition to 12 RF-101's in Thailand in 1965, six RB-66C aircraft, designed to perform both electronic intelligence (ELINT) and electronic countermeasures (ECM), were stationed at Takhli starting 26 May. Five B-66B's arrived at the same base late in September. The latter, known by the nickname, "Brown Cradle," was equipped to perform ECM jamming. ^{188/}

In late November, three F-100F's were assigned to Korat Air Base. A fourth was yet to arrive. The F-100F, called "Wild Weasel," was developed to combat the SA-2 SAM threat. They were specially equipped with vector radar homing and warning designed to provide homing and warning on C, S, or X band signals, and instantaneous bearing on the station. Early attacks against the SAM sites had been unsuccessful until a Navy A-4E hunter-killer aircraft accompanied the Air Force on a 31 October attack on two sites north of Hanoi. The Navy plane was downed but not before its equipment had guided the Air Force planes into the area and marked the target. But the Navy had a shortage of that type of aircraft and felt it needed them to support its own forces. It was this that led the Air Force to develop the F-100F so that it could go after the SA-2 sites when they posed a threat to reconnaissance missions. Although the equipment in the F-100F possessed a 360-degree capability, which was an improvement over the A-4E's equipment, the aircraft was too new at year's end to be certain of its performance. ^{189/}

e. Future of Reconnaissance in Thailand:

As 1965 drew to a close, all indications pointed to another increase in USAF's reconnaissance assets in Southeast Asia. Part of

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this expansion would be absorbed by Thailand bases. PACAF had requested authority to increase the size of its RF-101 squadrons from 12 to 18 aircraft. And the need was recognized to install better photo processing cells (PPC's) to increase the output of those units. The future status of Udorn's reconnaissance activities was not certain. The base was expecting an increase of about 80 percent in its reconnaissance forces in the first two months of 1966 and wanted a new PPC to meet the resultant increased workload. Plans were being considered to consolidate all Thailand base reconnaissance activities at that base in the spring of 1966. At the same time, however, a study was being made to move reconnaissance activities from Udorn to Korat when a new Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) moved to the latter base from Udorn. A facility to house the TACC at Korat was already under construction. ^{190/}

F. SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS IN LAOS

Development of a Rescue Capability

The commitment to fly U.S. reconnaissance missions over Laos in May 1964 created the need for a military search and rescue (SAR) capability in that country. Air America, a CIA sponsored civilian organization, had provided limited SAR support for the RLAF F-28's and could be pressed into service in the event Yankee Team aircraft were shot down while operating in Laos. However, a rescue effort mounted by Air America alone was considered inadequate and resources available to that organization at the time were limited.

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Anticipating the SAR requirement, Lt General Joseph H. Moore, 2AD Commander, asked PACAF (on 29 May 64) for the authority to employ U.S. aircraft and crews in search and rescue. Just eight days later, the first American jet, a Navy RF-8A, was shot down near Ban San in Laos, and General Moore had yet to receive a reply. According to the air attache in Vientiane, Colonel Robert F. Tyrell, Ambassador Leonard Unger had received three requests to allow U.S. pilots to provide close air support (CAS) for Air America helicopters making the rescue attempt. The Ambassador finally agreed to permit the use of Air America T-28 pilots, but too late. Both helicopters were shot up and the rescue attempt ended in failure. ^{191/}

Navy Lieutenant Charles F. Klusmann, pilot of the RF-8A, was captured by the Pathet Laos (PL) and held prisoner until his escape four months later. In a debriefing session, shortly after he was picked up on 1 September, Klusmann praised the Air America rescue attempt. He said that they were on the scene immediately after his aircraft was shot down and that the helicopter crews made every effort to reach him although they were subjected to intense ground fire. ^{192/}

Air America pilots participating in the SAR mission reported "conflicting reports" and "bad (radio) reception and confusion" during the rescue try. Both pilots said their helicopters received heavy ground fire. The observer aboard the helicopter making the first pass at the ridge, where Klusmann was supposed to be, was wounded. Captain William I. Cook, pilot of the second helicopter, said, "...at no time during the search did I have any knowledge of the type of aircraft downed, or the

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identity of the pilot. In fact I believed throughout the search that I was looking for a Laos T-28 pilot...." Both aircraft were unarmed and crew members were unable to return the fire. ^{193/}

On the day after Klusmann had been shot down, the Navy lost another F-8 in Laos. The pilot was picked up on 8 June by an Air America helicopter. This time the rescue was made on a wooded ridge 4,800 feet above sea level and the first two helicopters on the scene were unable to rescue the downed pilot because the aircraft could not hover at that altitude. However, a third helicopter managed to make a successful hoist pickup. ^{194/}

The success of the 8 June SAR effort was partly attributed to the control of Air America rescue resources by a single agency. At a meeting held in Udorn, Thailand, on 15 June 64, Colonel Tyrell said the pickup of the second Navy pilot went very smoothly when the military, represented by his office and SAW (Special Air Warfare) personnel, assumed responsibility for coordination and control of the search. The air attache was emphatic about the need for an on-scene SAR commander during rescue attempts. ^{195/}

It was pointed out at the same meeting that Air America was not staffed or equipped at the time to provide round-the-clock, all-weather SAR capability. The organization needed more personnel, aircraft, and equipment to do the job. This deficiency could only be corrected by CINCPAC who was responsible for funding the clandestine operation. ^{196/}

Confusion due to poor radio communications during early rescue operations had been reported by Air America pilots. At the 15 June meeting,

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Ben Moore, who was in charge of the Air America rotary wing program at Udorn, said that all five H-34 helicopters under his command were equipped with UHF (Ultra High Frequency) radios, but that some of Air America's fixed wing aircraft were not, and that the Air America communications network needed to be upgraded with UHF equipment. The ARA-25 airborne homing device was specifically mentioned as needed to improve communications. Mr. Moore also said that he needed five additional H-34's in order to provide good SAR coverage. ^{197/}

Two specific recommendations for rescue operations in the immediate future came out of the SAR meeting at Udorn. An SA-16 Amphibian, using the call sign "Charlie One" was recommended for use as an airborne controller whenever a large scale operation was planned in the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ) area. The second suggestion called for the use of an emergency "squeler" or "beeper" homing device by pilots. The homing devices were said to be the pilot's best assurance of being found by rescue aircraft. It was also pointed out at the meeting that due to the limited communications capability, a UHF/VHF/LF equipped A-38 would be needed to relay emergency calls. ^{198/}

Following the two-day meeting at Udorn, ZAD outlined a plan for rescue operations in Laos which was to be discussed at another Udorn meeting on 18 June. Five USAF H-34 helicopters would be transferred to Air America, if approved by higher headquarters, and based at Udorn. Four of the H-34's would be deployed to forward operating fields in Laos (Sites 15 and 89) where they would be placed on alert during Yankee Team reconnaissance missions over Laos. Two T-28 aircraft at Vientiane

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would be on alert also. These aircraft would provide air cover and rescue combat air patrol (RESCAP) in the event the Air America helicopters were scrambled. 2AD felt that the use of the two forward operating bases would provide complete rescue coverage, with quick reaction capability in the PDJ area. ^{199/}

If the transfer of the H-34's to Air America was not approved, the 2AD plan would station three USMC H-34 helicopters, operated by Marine crews, at Udorn. Since these helicopters would have to operate out of Udorn, it was pointed out that they could not provide coverage over the PDJ area without staging for fuel, and it would require two hours to reach the area after receiving the initial scramble order. ^{200/}

Under the 2AD plan, two HH-34B helicopters (which were airlifted to Udorn on 17 June for assembly) with trained rescue crews and personnel, would be stationed at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. These USAF helicopters were capable of supporting SAR operations within 100 miles of their base. The H-34's at Nakhon Phanom, equipped with Single Side Band (SSB) and UHF radio equipment, would be launched by the rescue control center in Saigon or by the on-scene rescue command aircraft. The helicopters could also answer requests for assistance from aircraft in distress. RESCAP for HH-43B helicopters at Nakhon Phanom would be provided by carrier-based A-1H aircraft placed on ramp alert at the Thai base. ^{201/}

In the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), two Marine H-34's would be placed on alert at Khe Sanh. The USMC helicopters had a 120 mile operating range. These rescue helicopters would receive their RESCAP from carrier based aircraft on alert duty at Da Nang. ^{202/}

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In the plan 2AD announced that an HU-16 rescue aircraft had been deployed to Da Nang. Configured with a full compliment of communications (UHF, VHF, and SSB radios) and radar equipment, the HU-16 would be used as a rescue control aircraft for the on-scene commander. The aircraft, which had fuel enough to stay airborne all day, would act as airborne communications relay aircraft during all missions, while maintaining an orbiting position near Nakhon Phanom. 2AD felt that if the provisions of the plan were implemented, quick reaction SAR coverage would be provided for the area concerned. 203/

Projected SAR requirements were not predicated on the commitment of Yankee Team forces alone. Early SAR planning was contingent upon the possibility of retaliatory strikes in North Vietnam and the growing need for a comprehensive interdiction operation in Laos. The 2AD Commander, General Moore, was charged with the responsibility for search and rescue for all Southeast Asia and a USAF SAR organization for Laos began to take shape under his direction in the summer months of 1964.

On 11 June 1964, an Air Support Operations Center (ASOC), operated by Detachment 2, 35th Tactical Group, was opened at Udorn, Thailand, under the direction of a newly-established deputy commander for 2AD Thailand (Dep Cmr 2AD Thai). The new deputy commander was responsible for all USAF air operations in Laos including search and rescue. He also coordinated rescue activities with Air America and the American Embassy's Air Operations Center in Vientiane. 204/

The first USAF rescue capability was actually established at Nakhon Phanom on 19 June with the arrival of 36 personnel of "Rescue 2,"

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a small air/sea rescue detachment of the 1st Air Rescue Squadron. This element of the Pacific Air Rescue Center (PARC) was equipped with two H-43B helicopters which had been airlifted to Udorn for assembly. PACAF announced on 20 June that Thailand based USAF assets could be used for SAR. Two days later PARC, located at Tan Son Nhut, notified PACAF that the procedures for coordinating rescue between Air America and USAF resources had been established. The Air America helicopters could be scrambled through the air attaché's office in Vientiane or by the HU-16 aircraft orbiting the area during U.S. air activity. 205/

Other rescue units were deployed to Thailand in the last half of 1964. By December, the 1st Air Rescue Squadron with two HH-43B helicopters was in operation at Korat. Two HH-43B's were also stationed at Takhli. In addition, Takhli had a local base rescue (LBR) detachment. There were two HU-16 Albatross aircraft at Korat. 206/

Rounding out the SAR organization for Southeast Asia were USAF rescue units at Da Nang and Bien Hoa in South Vietnam, including four HU-16's at Da Nang. In addition, the U.S. Marine Corps provided H-34 helicopters and crews to the Joint Search and Rescue Center at Tan Son Nhut for deployment to a forwarding operating base at Quang Tri. The U.S. Navy maintained a life guard submarine and surface vessels at strategic positions along the coast of North and South Vietnam. USAF jets in Thailand and RLAF T-28's in Laos were available for use in RESCAP roles. USN carrier-based aircraft were also called on to provide rescue cover and support for SAR forces. 207/

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In September 1964, 2AD delegated authority to commit U.S. forces into Laos for search and rescue escort and air cover missions to the deputy commander at Udorn. This authority was to be exercised, however, only upon request from the U.S. Ambassador in Laos, and 2AD was to be notified immediately upon decision to launch the SAR force. The division also was to be kept informed of the progress of SAR missions. 208/

Although the USAF rescue operation capability continued to grow through the end of 1964 and throughout 1965, Air America had provided the backbone for the humanitarian operation in the early months. In the 1st year of operation, 1 June 64 - 1 June 65, Air America made 21 successful recoveries in Laos. In that period, USAF rescued five pilots in Laos; four in March 1965, and one in April. Three pilots were reported captured, three were believed to be dead, and the status of the three aircraft crews was listed as unknown. The first pilot shot down and captured, Lt. Klusmann, was picked up by a Bird and Son (similar to Air America) helicopter when he escaped a few months after his capture. In the second half of 1965, USAF crews began to account for the majority of successful rescue missions in Laos. (Note: See the following table compiled from Air America and USAF rescue logs maintained at the Udorn ASOC).

TABLE 6

<u>DATE</u>	<u>AIRCRAFT TYPE</u>	<u>PILOT OR CREW STATUS</u>
6 June 64	RF-88	Captured and escaped. Picked up by Bird and Son
7 June 64	F-8B	Air America Rescue
1 July 64	UH-34D	Air America Rescue
1 Aug 64	UH-34D	Air America Rescue
18 Aug 64	F-100	Air America Rescue

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DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE	PILOT OR CREW STATUS
18 Aug 64	UH-34D	Air America Rescue
12 Nov 64	UH-34D	Air America Rescue
19 Nov 64	F-100	Air America Rescue
21 Nov 64	RF-101	Air America Rescue
21 Nov 64	Bell Helicopter	Air America Rescue
22 Dec 64	RT-28	Pilot believed dead
4 Jan 65	T-28	Air America Rescue
4 Jan 65	T-28	Air America Rescue
5 Jan 65	F-105	Land Party Rescue
13 Jan 65	F-105	Air America Rescue
13 Jan 65	F-100	Air America Rescue
1 Feb 65	RT-28	Pilot believed dead
18 Feb 65	Dornier Aircraft	Air America Rescue
19 Feb 65	F-100	Air America Rescue
19 Feb 65	UH-34D	Air America Rescue
1 Mar 65	UH-43D	Air America Rescue
2 Mar 65	F-105	Air America Rescue
2 Mar 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
5 Mar 65	UH-34D	USAF Rescue
25 Mar 65	Helio Courier	Air America Rescue
31 Mar 65	F-105	Air America Rescue
31 Mar 65	F-100	USAF Rescue
2 Apr 65	A-1H	USAF Rescue
5 Apr 65	F-105	Crew Status Unknown
7 Apr 65	B-57	Air America Rescue
11 Jun 65	A-1H	Crew Status Unknown
29 Apr 65	RF-101	Crew Status Unknown
9 May 65	F-105	Pilot believed captured
16 May 65	T-28	Pilot believed dead
17 May 65	F-105	Air America Rescue
18 May 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
21 May 65	Porter Aircraft	Pilot believed captured
3 Jun 65	A-4D	Pilot believed captured
8 Jun 65	F-105	Air America Rescue
14 Jun 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
20 Jun 65	F-4C	Pilot believed captured
22 Jun 65	B-57	Air America Rescue
23 Jun 65	F-105	Crew Status Unknown
29 Jun 65	RF-101	USAF Rescue
3 Jul 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
7 Jul 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
13 Jul 65	T-28	Pilot Status Unknown
13 Jul 65	T-28	USAF Rescue
14 Jul 65	A-6A	USAF Rescue
18 Jul 65	A-6A	Air America Rescue
24 Jul 65	F-4C	Crew Status Unknown
24 Jul 65	A-6A	Pilot believed dead
		USAF Rescue

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<u>DATE</u>	<u>AIRCRAFT TYPE</u>	<u>PILOT OR CREW STATUS</u>
24 Jul 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
27 Jul 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
27 Jul 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
27 Jul 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
27 Jul 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
27 Jul 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
27 Jul 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
27 Jul 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
28 Jul 65	A-4	USAF Rescue
29 Jul 65	RF-101	Pilot believed dead
2 Aug 65	F-105	Pilot believed dead
3 Aug 65	F-105	Pilot believed dead
10 Aug 65	F-105	Air America Rescue
12 Aug 65	UH-34D	Air America Rescue
13 Aug 65	RF-101	Pilot Status Unknown
24 Aug 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
24 Aug 65	F-4B	Crew Status Unknown
24 Aug 65	F-4C	Crew Status Unknown
28 Aug 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
28 Aug 65	T-28	Air America Rescue
29 Aug 65	A-1H	Pilot believed dead
29 Aug 65	F-8	Pilot Status Unknown
29 Aug 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
31 Aug 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
2 Sep 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
4 Sep 65	F-4C	Pilot believed dead
4 Sep 65	T-28	Pilot Status Unknown
6 Sep 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
10 Sep 65	A-1E	Pilot Status Unknown
15 Sep 65	T-28	Crashed at Udorn AB
16 Sep 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
16 Sep 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
17 Sep 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
20 Sep 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
20 Sep 65	H-43	Crew Status Unknown
20 Sep 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
21 Sep 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
24 Sep 65	F-4C	USAF Rescue
27 Sep 65	RF-101	Pilot Status Unknown
29 Sep 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
30 Sep 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
30 Sep 65	F-4C	Pilot believed dead
1 Oct 65	F-4C	Pilot Status Unknown
5 Oct 65	F-4C	USAF Rescue
5 Oct 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
5 Oct 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
5 Oct 65	RF-101	Pilot Status Unknown

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<u>DATE</u>	<u>AIRCRAFT TYPE</u>	<u>PILOT OR CREW STATUS</u>
13 Oct 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
15 Oct 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
15 Oct 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
18 Oct 65	F-4C	Crew Status Unknown
22 Oct 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
24 Oct 65	T-28	Pilot Status Unknown
1 Nov 65	RF-101	Pilot Status Unknown
3 Nov 65	F-105	Pilot believed dead
6 Nov 65	CH-3C	Navy Rescued one crew member
12 Nov 65	F-105	Pilot believed dead
16 Nov 65	F-105	Pilot presumed missing
18 Nov 65	F-105	USAF Rescue
28 Nov 65	F-105	Pilot presumed missing
1 Dec 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
8 Dec 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
15 Dec 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
18 Dec 65	F-4C	USAF Rescue
20 Dec 65	F-4C	Pilot Status Unknown
20 Dec 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown
21 Dec 65	F-105	Pilot Status Unknown

The USAF SAR aircraft inventory in Thailand changed little in the first half of 1965. In March, there were still only two HU-16 Albatross aircraft and seven H-43 helicopters at Thai bases. The number of H-43's increased to 11 in May and, in June, three HC-54's were sent to Udorn. The HU-16's were phased out of operation in Thailand as the HC-54's began to take over the function of airborne command post. The increase in H-43B helicopters, during the period, reflected the addition of local base rescue (LBR) units at Udorn, Ubon, and Korat similar to the LBR detachment already at Takhli.^{209/}

Early in the year, the deputy commander at Udorn asked that Navy A-1E aircraft be made available for use in SAR RESCAP missions in Laos. Pending the arrival of the A-1E's, he requested and obtained permission to use air commando pilots flying USAF-marked T-28's during SAR operations.

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By May, Navy A-1H aircraft were being used for RESCAP over Laos. The deputy commander wanted to provide an armament capability for the A-1H's at Udorn in order to stage the Navy aircraft out of that base. 210/

In the last half of 1965, USAF A-1E's, on rotation from bases in South Vietnam, were staging at Udorn and Nakhon Phanom to provide SAR RESCAP. F-105's and F-4C's were also used for the vital mission. In the event an airplane was shot down in Laos, all aircraft in the vicinity took part in the search and rescue operation. In May 2AD said, "... (it is our policy) that, when pilots eject, there is no higher priority air task than to assist in search and recovery of (the) downed pilot...." At the same time, the Commander 2AD lauded the growing USAF SAR capability. "...It is significant to note," he said, "the tremendous success which USAF SAR forces have had in the search and recovery of not only USAF but (South Vietnam's Air Force) and (U.S.) Navy pilots in the recent past...." 211/

Colonel John R. Murphy, Deputy Commander 2AD, Thai, told 2AD in June that the newly assigned HC-54 aircraft were not equipped properly to perform the assigned function as SAR flying command post. Colonel Murphy wanted additional UHF communication equipment installed in the aircraft and he wanted a special console built in the cabin of the HC-54 to provide a "command post" arrangement for the officer directing rescue operations at the scene. The deputy commander considered the rescue airborne command post in use at the time to be the weakest link in the rescue operation. 212/

Another problem was the limited range of rescue helicopters and some RESCAP aircraft. Air America helicopters and T-28's were staging out

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of forward operating bases in Laos in order to be in close proximity during air operations, but USAF SAR assets were still staging from Udorn and Nakhon Phanom in mid-1965. Efforts were made to deploy USAF H-43 helicopters in the same manner as the Air America aircraft, but this was considered a "temporary stop-gap," at best. However, the deputy commander at Udorn recommended in July that the H-43's be placed on rotational deployment to a forward operating base known as Site 36, near the PDJ. The deputy commander said the recommended action would provide knowledge and experience which could later be passed on to HC-3 helicopter crews and it would also demonstrate USAF intentions to the American Ambassador in Laos. ^{213/}

By November, seven HH-3C's were added to the SAR inventory in Thailand and authorization had been obtained to pre-position the new helicopters at forward operating bases in Laos. Two HH-3C's were stationed at Nakhon Phanom, two were maintained at Site 36 and three were kept at Udorn. ^{214/}

Meanwhile, the deputy commander for 2AD Thai picked up responsibility for all SAR operations in Laos and North Vietnam (on 15 August 65). Previously this control had been centralized at Tan Son Nhut. Under the new procedures, the deputy commander was given authority to initiate or terminate SAR efforts in his area and to control the SAR forces involved. ^{215/}

Near the end of 1965, the SAR procedures developed over the preceding year were outlined in a letter for all tactical pilots in Southeast Asia. During high risk missions, appropriate SAR forces were placed on alert. An HC-54 flying command post maintained an airborne orbit over Thailand, or Laos, as close to the target area as possible. The command post's primary function was to monitor SAR radio frequencies and guard

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channels and take over on-scene command of available SAR forces when SAR missions actually began. From the moment an HC-54 commander became aware of an aircraft in distress, he was in charge of the SAR operation. The on-scene commander ascertained available forces and requested additional SAR assets as required. He also maintained constant contact with the Joint Search and Rescue Center (JSARC) at Tan Son Nhut and the SAR control center in the Udorn TACC. HU-16 amphibians operated over the Gulf of Tonkin and were assigned tasks identical to HC-54's. However, the flying boats could land on water to recover downed crew members. As discussed earlier, HH-3C helicopters were pre-positioned at forward operating bases in Laos, and, during 'very high risk' missions, were placed on airborne alert near the target area. HH-43B/F and H-34 helicopters at Udorn and Nakhon Phanom, and at Da Nang in South Vietnam, served in a shorter-range recovery role. The Da Nang helicopters were deployed to Quang Tri during air operations. 216/

Usually when an aircraft was shot down other members of his flight immediately became part of the rescue force. The pilot spotting the chute automatically assumed a low-cover role and tried to fix the position where the pilot went down. The other elements of the flight climbed to a high-level cover position and alerted the SAR forces standing by. Following this procedure, the low-cover aircraft was relieved and the pilot returned to Udorn for an immediate debriefing by SAR personnel. 217/

If the pilot of the aircraft flying low-cover believed that the downed airman was in danger from ground activity, he had the authority to attack. He could also attack AAA positions in a flank suppression role

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while helicopters were attempting recovery. When the A-1E RESCAP aircraft arrived, the low-cover aircraft led them to the scene. 218/

As 1965 came to a close, rescue procedures and skills continued to be refined and honed into a highly effective, fast-acting force to preserve the lives of airmen shot down in battle.

G. SUMMARY

Pathet Laos forces in Laos, aided by PAVN troops from North Vietnam, had ignored the provisions of the 1962 Geneva Accords almost from the beginning. With the passage of time, they more and more openly violated the agreements. Finally, in May 1964, they launched an attack against Neutralist forces on the Plaine des Jarres.

Meanwhile, the U.S., recognizing Communist aims, had been conducting a Military Assistance Program (MAP) to train and equip FAR and Neutralist forces. In March 1964, two months before the PDJ attack, the MAP was expanded to include the Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF). Detachment 6, 1st Air Commando Wing, was moved into Udorn Airfield, Thailand to set up a T-28 training program to train Laos pilots and upgrade the RLAF.

The PDJ attacks resulted in the U.S. taking two immediate steps: On 18 May, the first Yankee Team photo reconnaissance missions were flown over Laos, and before May had ended, the T-28 training program was accelerated to obtain more pilots desperately needed to give close air support (CAS) to FAR and Neutralist forces. The stepped-up program included training of Thai pilots to augment the RLAF. By June, the first of the

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Thai pilots were flying T-28 strike missions over Laos.

The start of Yankee Team and the expansion of T-28 training marked the beginning of a significant buildup of the USAF in Thailand. The buildup continued at a gradual pace through the first half of 1965, then surged ahead following a July announcement by U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert S. MacNamara that there was to be a large increase in U.S. forces in Southeast Asia.

The U.S. interdiction program in Laos, which began in December 1964 with a small number of armed route reconnaissance missions spread over a relatively long span of time, continued searching for a mobile enemy who found sanctuary in rugged mountains and dense jungles. Officials expressed disappointment with the results of these early missions and plans were made for a shift in target emphasis, even though the interdiction operation was barely a month old. By mid-1965, Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger interdiction efforts were aimed at establishing and maintaining choke points along various strategic routes, cutting or cratering roads and destroying bridges. Missions were being flown on a daily basis from airfields in Thailand as well as USN Aircraft Carriers and bases in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). Yet, the weight of effort seemed inadequate in the face of problems and restrictions encountered by pilots flying the missions. In the last four months of the year, target emphasis again shifted. This time to military areas, installations and supply points. In the summer months, a close air support (CAS) operation, called "Bango/Whiplash," was established using BR/ST assets. These strikes were in support of FAR and Neutralist forces and were directed by Forward Air Controllers. Bango/Whiplash efforts were considered successful

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by Ambassador William E. Sullivan in Vientiane. A series of incidents resulted in the suspension of all Steel Tiger missions in October and the early part of November, and interdiction efforts were being questioned in Washington. Many officials seemed to feel that the Laos interdiction effort had failed in that it did not halt the flow of supplies and personnel infiltrating into southern Laos and the RVN. However, no one would deny that the program was producing much in the way of economic and psychological damage to North Vietnam and the Pathet Laos. At the close of the year, a new operating area was established. Strikes in the Tiger Hound area, as the new zone was called, were also directed by Forward Air Controllers. Interdiction efforts in this area, under new rules and procedures, would prove increasingly effective in the months to come. However, most of the operating procedures incorporated in the Tiger Hound operation had been suggested early in the BR/ST program.

Meanwhile, Yankee Team, which had its beginning in South Vietnam, was moved in April 1965 to Udorn, and a month later the operation was doubled in size. Some of the restrictions the program had operated under were lifted during the second half of 1965, permitting increased flexibility in mission scheduling.

Reconnaissance activities in Thailand grew rapidly. On 2 April - the day after the RF-101 reconnaissance planes had arrived at Udorn to fly Yankee Team missions - the JCS authorized their use for a second reconnaissance program nicknamed, "Blue Tree," which called for missions over North Vietnam. On the 19th of that month, the Udorn-based aircraft became involved in still another operation when they flew their first reconnaissance missions

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in support of Rolling Thunder. The latter also took the RF-101's over North Vietnam. In August, they started flying reconnaissance over SA-2 SAM sites in North Vietnam. That specialized program was nicknamed, "Iron Hand."

In June 1964, shortly after the beginning of Yankee Team operations, Air America crews accomplished the first search and rescue (SAR) mission in Laos. Although the need for an organized military air rescue capability was recognized, Air America continued to play a major role in Laos rescue operations well into 1965.

Rescue 2, an element of the Pacific Air Rescue Center, was sent to Nakhon Phanom in June 1965. It was USAF's first air/sea rescue activity in Thailand. The 2AD Commander was responsible for the operational control of all USAF SAR forces in Southeast Asia. In August 1965, he delegated SAR responsibilities in Laos and North Vietnam to the Deputy Commander 2AD, Thailand. TDY USAF rescue crews were replaced with PCS personnel and the rescue aircraft inventory was enlarged.

Despite limitations, Air America, and later USAF rescue operations were highly successful in the recovery of downed airmen.

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CHAPTER III

THE COMMUNIST THREAT IN THAILAND

A. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENT

In late 1964 and early 1965, while the war continued to intensify in Vietnam and the eyes of the world focused on the American commitment there, Asian Communists launched a systematic and determined drive against the autonomy of Thailand. Acts of terrorism, murder, and sabotage were definitely on the increase. By mid-1965, Thai border police had intercepted illegal arms and ammunitions and the first encounter with a band of armed insurgents was reported. If doubt had existed that a full-blown subversive effort was in the making, it was soon removed by Communist propaganda and diplomatic pronouncements. The verbal attack mounted by subversive elements clearly indicated that Thailand had indeed been selected as the next target of Red aggression.

During the same period, U.S. military personnel and equipment began to pour into Thailand as the country became a staging area for the air war in Vietnam and in Laos. Increased Thai involvement and cooperation with the United States in the Vietnamese situation led to a step-up in the subversive timetable and threats of worse things to come from Peking and Hanoi. The security of Air Force personnel and equipment became a matter of considerable concern in the face of mounting evidence that acts of violence and sabotage were to be directed against U.S. military forces and installations in northeast Thailand. Although U.S. officials were vitally concerned, the initiative for combatting communistic subversion remained with the Royal

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Thai government.

Communists had been active in Thailand to some degree before the 1964-1965 period. A party organization had been established there in 1942. It was officially banned in 1958. However, the party continued to operate with many of its members living outside of the country. The movement suffered a more severe setback in May 1961 when two of the country's key Communist leaders were executed by the Royal Thai government. The party organization was badly shaken. Members deserted or withdrew public support and recruitment was curtailed. Despite this severe setback, the Thai subversive movement continued to grow. A clandestine radio calling itself "The Voice of the People of Thailand" began operation beyond the borders of the country, the following year, and the murder of 13 Thai government informants and witnesses by Communists gave stark, public notice of the movement's continued existence.^{1/}

During this period, Chinese-trained agents were reported to be entering northeast Thailand in order to distribute propaganda materials to small Thai villages on the Laos-Thai border. They were also said to be smuggling arms and ammunition into the country. In September 1964, two boxes of pistols, rifles, and hand grenades brought into Thailand from Laos were intercepted by border policemen. Similar reports of illegal traffic in arms and ammunitions continued to be made during the period. The discovery of some 60 men, armed with rifles and two machine guns, living in the hills of Nakae District lent credence to suspicions that the weapons were destined for armed subversive groups. Nakae District in Nakhon Phanom Province was the area where Thai border police were to make their first

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encounter with armed insurgents in July 1965. ^{2/}

1. USAF Installations Threatened

In late August 1964, Detachment 2, 35th Tactical Group at Udorn Airfield, the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) installation near Udorn Thani, Thailand, initiated a sabotage alert, after being informed by local authorities of a possible sabotage attempt on base facilities. Maximum security precautions were taken between sundown and sunup on the 25th and 26th of August. Although extra movement was observed along the base perimeter and in the T-28 parking area, no attempted sabotage was noted. Officials believed security procedures and reaction times were being tested. ^{3/}

Two months later, on 31 October, Thai CID representatives warned U.S. officials that the first three days in November would be a period of "special emphasis" for Communist agents with instructions to carry out sabotage against U.S. installations and property. The creation of street incidents and the theft of personal property was to be part of the program to harass U.S. personnel. On 1 November, Colonel Jack H. McCreery, Deputy Commander, 2AD, Thailand, directed all subordinate commanders to "take ^{4/} extra-ordinary precautions" during the first few days of November.

Installation Security Limitations:

The mutual defense assistance agreement on 17 October 1950, between the U.S. and Thailand, did not authorize U.S. military personnel to bear arms except in certain limited categories. However, the Deputy Commander, 2AD Thai, was granted authority to arm personnel required to cover security gaps, but only for periods of special alerts. The prospect of imminent sabotage attempts against U.S. military installations in northeast Thailand

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focused attention on the inadequacies of existing base security programs. Security deficiencies experienced at Don Muang Air Base and reported to the Chief of the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group in Bangkok in November 1964 were similar to those facing commanders at other installations throughout Thailand. Lack of proper fencing and lighting systems around flight line, cantment and ammo storage areas, portable communications equipment for security forces and an insufficient number of Air Police personnel were among the many security problems facing USAF commanders in Thailand. Colonel Jack H. McCreery, Deputy Commander, 2AD, Thailand (2DCT), from August 1964 - May 1965, felt that the immediate threat posed by Communist insurgents was one of organized acts of sabotage and terrorism against USAF installations rather than an open insurgency against the Royal Thai Government (RTG). In his end of tour report, Colonel McCreery said: ^{5/}

"...I believe that the only reason such acts have not been carried out already is the fact that the buildup of forces in Thailand and the escalation of the air war in North Vietnam were so rapid that these subversive elements were not ready to react...."

Colonel McCreery also stated that he felt the time for such actions was fast approaching and could be accomplished successfully to begin with for the following reasons:

1. All USAF units were tenant on Royal Thai Air Force installations which were, without exception, vulnerable to penetration.
2. Airfield and site security in all cases was the responsibility of the RTAF which utilized insufficient numbers or relatively inexperienced and poorly equipped RTAF personnel and some unarmed civilian guards.

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3. Ambassadorial policy prohibited the arming of USAF security personnel.
4. The rapid influx of USAF units into Thailand resulted in extremely crowded and vulnerable conditions.
5. The long, poorly patrolled Laos-Thai border permitted practically free movement of personnel to and from Laos and North Vietnam. Colonel McCroery concluded: ^{6/}

"...These factors all add up to a golden opportunity to deal a devastating blow to U.S. Forces and National Prestige in form of coordinated acts of sabotage if they are indeed ready and willing to escalate the present conflict in this manner."

2. Communists Announce Intentions

Although no incidents of actual sabotage were reported in the closing months of 1964, several thefts occurred, including that of a .50 caliber aircraft machine gun along with bomb racks and rocket pylons from the armament section at Udorn Airfield. The Communists themselves, however, removed any doubt about their intentions toward Thailand in November when the newly-established Thailand Independence Movement published a manifesto proclaiming its four point program: ^{7/}

1. To drive the U.S. imperialists aggressors out of the territory of Thailand.
2. To overthrow the dictatorial and traitorous Thanom government and replace it with a government composed of political parties and patriotic and democratic members that follow a policy of neutrality and peace.

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3. To struggle for salvaging and safeguarding the genuine rights and liberties of the people.

4. To struggle for a policy of neutrality, peace, democracy, and for the prosperity and happiness of the people.

The clandestine radio "Voice of the People of Thailand" announced the formation of the Thailand Independence Movement, 8 December 1964. Five days later, the new China News Agency carried the new organization's manifesto. On 23 January 1965, another clandestine organization calling itself "The Patriotic Front of Thailand" was announced by "The Voice of the People of Thailand." The new subversive group offered a six point program:

1. Abrogate aid and other agreements with U.S.
2. Expand civil liberties.
3. Withdraw from SEATO.
4. Cooperate with "International Peace Force."
5. Eliminate foreign enterprise.
6. Oppose imperialism.

Less than two months later, a New China Radio broadcast carried the warning from the clandestine Communist movement in Thailand, that American attacks on North Vietnam could bring the Vietnam war to Thailand.

3. Step-up in Subversion Expected

Colonel McCreery felt that all indications pointed to a step-up in the Communist timetable in Thailand. He believed that the increased tempo of Communist activities was the direct result of increased Thai

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involvement in the Vietnamese situation. In spite of joint denials by both U.S. and Thai government officials concerning the extent of Thai cooperation with the U.S. in the air war in Vietnam and Laos, the enemy was apparently aware of the full extent of USAF operations from installations in Thailand. Colonel McCreery said: ^{9/}

'...It is obvious to any trained observer that USAF forces located on Royal Thai Air Force installations are actively participating in armed strikes against North Vietnam and Laos. The collection of such intelligence information and its transmission to Hanoi and Peking is a simple matter indeed. The RTAF bases and installations involved are all very accessible and observable, being installations (located) on or near heavily traveled highways and population centers.'

Thailand's Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn in January charged that Communist China had brought a million Baht worth of Thai currency in Hong Kong and was using it to finance a subversive group in Thailand. Foreign Minister Thanat Khonam repeated the Prime Minister's charge and added that "Thailand is a target of Communist expansion in Southeast Asia." Later in the year, Australian Minister of External Affairs, Easluck, stated that the withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam would only serve to move the conflict elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Perhaps the most ominous prediction of all came from Stanislov Andropov, second secretary, Embassy of the USSR, Bangkok. He was reported to have said that the Vietnamese situation cannot be settled by force and that as soon as a solution is achieved in Vietnam, the emphasis will shift to Thailand, which he called "The Gate to the Far East." ^{10/}

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4. Subversive Activity Increases in 1965

In the first half of 1965, Communist activity continued to increase steadily. A provincial policeman and two village chiefs were murdered in Nakhon Phanom, and the frequency of reports of Communist activity stemming from that wild, mountainous and sparsely settled province indicated that the subversives were beginning to concentrate their efforts in that area. This assumption would be borne out by the close of 1965 as subversive pressure increased to an alarming degree in that area. Some reports also indicated that USAF units in the area would be prime targets. ^{11/}

The air base at Nakhon Phanom was the first military installation in northeast Thailand to experience actual sabotage attempts. On three different occasions, during February, 200 feet of runway lighting cable was cut out of the runway lighting system at the RTAF base, which is situated just across the river from one of many trouble spots in Laos. Office of Special Investigation (OSI) officials stated that the theft of the cable could have been the result of an attempt at petty larceny. However, the officials pointed out that the incidents took place on three separate occasions, and in each case, just before the runway lights were to be used. The possibility of deliberate sabotage could not be overlooked. During May, telephone wires from the STRATCOM Switchboard near Udorn were severed three times. One wire was taken from the line, and then only 100 feet. Later the same month, a six-foot length of one-half-inch antenna transmitter cable was removed from the base of an antenna tower just outside the STRATCOM compound. OSI officials felt that these incidents were harassment tactics, since the theft of the

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telephone wire and the six feet of cable would not be worth the risk of being caught. ¹²

5 The Vietnamese Refugee Problem

The RTI considered the 35,000 to 40,000 Vietnamese refugees living in northeastern Thailand to be the most explosive potential in the Communist subversive movement. Colonel McCreery shared this view. He estimated that some 90 percent of the displaced Vietnamese were loyal to North Vietnam on varying degrees, and made monthly monetary contributions to the Hanoi regime. Colonel McCreery said, "...it is this relatively large concentration of Communist controlled or influenced people that is the real cause for concern in Thailand..." ^{13/}

The Vietnamese problem had existed in Thailand since 1945-1946, when some 70,000 refugees fled their homeland during the Indo-China war. They entrenched themselves in Thailand's relatively poor northeastern provinces and, although they were not allowed to own land, soon dominated the tailoring, photography, watch and bicycle repair, carpentry and the food marketing industry. The RTG had begun a program of repatriation in 1959 in an effort to eliminate this source of friction, but the program collapsed in August 1964 following the Gulf of Tonkin incident. There were an estimated 30,000-40,000 unwanted refugees remaining in the country. Although the vast majority of these people seemed to be politically apathetic, there was little doubt that they were subjected to various degrees of control and influence from North Vietnam. ^{14/}

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There were nearly 6,000 Vietnamese refugees living in Udorn Province alone. Of these, some 5,400 were estimated to be loyal or sympathetic to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). Families loyal to the DRV were organized into groups of ten families. Each group had an appointed leader who was responsible to a leader at the next higher level. All groups in Udorn Province were organized under the leadership of Pham Van Tuong and his deputy, Wian Wan Cuong. These people were thought to have contributed hundreds of thousands of baht (\$1=20.65 baht) each year to the Communist cause. They were reported to have donated more than 300,000 baht (\$14,423) to the Communists in a single, special collection held early in 1965. ^{15/}

Although a special devotion to Ho Chi Minh and loyalty to the Democratic Republic in Vietnam continued to some extent, OSI officials believed that the majority of the refugees were losing interest in repatriation, since letters from friends and relatives still in the DRV painted a dismal picture of the situation there. Early in 1965, suggestions had been made within the Thai government to relocate the Vietnamese refugees away from the sensitive border areas in northeast Thailand, but by mid-1965 no concrete action had been taken. In May, Thai Police LtCol Sathaphorn Purnasamrit, Secretary to the Government's Refugee Relocation Committee, said that committee meetings were held sporadically and that they were usually held only when the situation in Laos deteriorated. At the end of June, the committee still had not devised positive plans to implement the suggestion. ^{16/}

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In addition to the Vietnamese problem, other minority groups in Thailand were a source of concern for the RIG, particularly the underprivileged people of the sparsely populated northeastern provinces. Ethnically and linguistically these people were more Laos than Thai. Poverty and disease stalked their land and many felt they had been mistreated or neglected by the central government. Much of the subversive propaganda was directed at this group. The basic themes were as follows: ^{17/}

1. That Thailand is Laos not Thailand.
2. The central government neglects and oppresses the people of the northeast.
3. The central government is dictatorial and corrupt.
4. Thai leaders are lackeys of U.S. imperialism.

While the subversion in northeast Thailand steadily increased, both Malaysian and pro-Indonesian agents were reported to be agitating the predominant Muslim population of the five southern provinces in Thailand behind religious fronts. Thai officials were also keeping a cautious eye on subversive developments in neighboring Burma and Malaysia. Mutual border violations by subversives brought Thai and Malaysian officials together in March in Kuala Lumpur to sign a new agreement on cross-border operations which would permit either Thailand or Malaysian security forces to pursue Communist terrorists across the common border. An estimated 500 guerrillas of the Malaysian Communist Party were reported to be active in the jungle along the Thai-Malaysian border. ^{18/}

The RIG established mobile development units designated to improve economic conditions. Regional development projects were undertaken and

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special training programs for police and civilian officials were held in an effort to counter Communist propaganda and subversive activity. Colonel McCreery considered Thai efforts as "some very positive actions" to counter Communist tactics. He said:

"...given time, Royal Thailand Government efforts to control subversive activities should become more effective."

In June, subversive activities were continued, but at a seemingly more subdued pace. Numerous reports concerning alleged attempts by foreign nations to obtain information directly from U.S. military personnel, or intelligence on direct observation of USAF activities, were on file at the Udorn Air Base District Office, but, other than periodic murders, no major sabotage or subversive incidents had occurred. Gun-running, however, became a big business in the first half of the year. Thai security officials estimated that from 2,500 to 3,000 weapons, along with 75,000 to 95,000 rounds of ammunition, were smuggled into Thailand from Laos between January and June. Some Thai officials gave an estimate of from 250 to 500 weapons. Only 57 weapons were actually confiscated. An estimated 95 percent of the weapons entering the country were American made and probably obtained from various army factions in Laos. ^{20/}

During the first half of 1965 also, four or five groups of Chinese Communist-trained Thai nationals were reported to have infiltrated into Thailand from Western Laos. They were sent to Thailand in groups of four or five unarmed, and with no particular missions other than to establish themselves in certain areas. An estimated 400 Thais and Thai-born Chinese were trained by the Chinese Communists in Southern Yunnan Province for infiltration into Thailand. OSI officials felt that these subversive-

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trained elements were to be used eventually in guerrilla activities, since they had been established in the country. ^{21/}

By 1965, it was an established fact that the situation was also evident, and the end of the year would see the men switch from defensive, unarmed, activity to an armed offensive campaign in northeast Thailand. The Nakhon Phanom Province area was to take the brunt of the subversive attack. The vulnerability of U.S. military personnel and equipment was unchanged. However, Colonel McC... ^{22/}

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"Time in this case, I believe, is on our side. (Planned) Airfield construction will provide adequate operating facilities and dispersal of aircraft, (and) increased security measures, active and passive, will make our position more tenable..."

Communist activity in Thailand was covert and held to a minimum from August to October 1965. However, the insurgency suddenly became overt and even more aggressive in the last two months of the year than at any other time. Communist insurgents in the country were ordered to take up arms for the first time. These guerrilla bands began to openly challenge police control in the northeast provinces, especially in the Nakae District in Nakhon Phanom Province. More and more murders were reported committed by Red agents and clashes between border policemen and bands of armed Communists were reported weekly.

The propaganda theme espoused earlier in the year by clandestine radio broadcasts beamed at Thailand had emphasized opposition to the Royal Thai Government and the need to protect "the right of the people." By

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November, the American military, especially the USAF, in Thailand came under the Communist's verbal guns. The number-one ploy in the insurgent propaganda program became "drive the U.S. imperialist aggressors out of Thailand." ^{23/}

In November, Thailand's armed forces were placed on alert because of the open conflict between border police and armed insurgents, and the situation continued to worsen during the last two months of 1965. The year 1966 would find Thai army personnel moving into the northeast provinces, as a precautionary matter and strong action would be carried out against suspected Communist agents. The USAF buildup would continue in Thailand and Air Force officials would be deeply concerned with growing guerrilla activity, but, as in 1965, counter-insurgency activities would remain the province of the Royal Thai Government.

AIR DEFENSE OF THAILAND

In 1964 and the first of 1965, the use of USAF assets for air defense of Thailand, as well as South Vietnam (RVN), was the responsibility of the Commander of the Mainland Southeast Asia Air Defense Sector (Commander 2AD) at Tan Son Nhut. Although authority to declare aircraft outside of friendly territory hostile had to be retained by the air defense sector Commander, authority to engage Communist bloc aircraft overflying Thailand, or to engage aircraft designated as hostile, could be delegated. With the establishment of a new command element at Udorn Airfield in August 1964, this ^{24/} authority was delegated to the deputy commander, 2AD, Thailand (2DCT).

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1. Rules of Engagement

Under the then prevailing "rules of engagement," the deputy commander in Thailand was authorized to use available resources to engage and destroy hostile aircraft overflying the country. Hot pursuit of the enemy into North Vietnam (DRV), Laos, Cambodia and over international waters was also authorized. Crossing into Communist Chinese territory, ^{25/} however, was not permitted.

2. Radar Surveillance

A jointly manned USAF/RTAF radar and communications facility-control and reporting post (CRP)- was established at Udorn in the last half of 1964 to provide radar surveillance over central Laos and north-east Thailand. CRP's were also positioned at Ubon and Nakhon Phanom for the same purpose. Under the direction of 2DCT, the CRP's were responsible for detecting and identifying hostile aircraft and were prepared to control air defense actions, including scramble, direction during intercept and return of Thai based air defense fighters. ^{26/}

3. Air Defense Posture

During the last half of 1964, there were only four tactical fighter aircraft assigned to the air defense of Thailand. These were four F-102's deployed from Clark Air Base in the Philippines to Don Muang Air Base near Bangkok. The deployment of air defense aircraft had been a continuous U.S. commitment since 1961. ^{27/}

In August 1964, Ambassador Leonard Unger, then American Ambassador to Laos, asked 2DCT to provide an air defense capability at Udorn.

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Ambassador Unger felt that the Don Muang based F-102's would not be able to provide air defense for Vientiane should it become necessary. The request was denied that same month because USAF officials believed that F-105's at Korat and the F-100's at Takhli provided an adequate day-fighter air defense capability, and the F-102's could be quickly deployed to Udorn, if required. ^{28/}

The air defense posture in Thailand remained unchanged during the last half of 1964. Early in 1965, the Royal Australian Air Force stationed eight MF-6 Sabres at Ubon Air Base under the operational control of 2DCT. Their location near the Laotian Panhandle greatly enhanced the air defense capability in Thailand. ^{29/}

4. Request for F-4C

Colonel Jack H. McCreery, 2DCT commander from July 1964 to May 1965, considered Ubon in the northeast sector as the best location for launching interceptors against hostile aircraft. In May 1965, he reported to 2AD that Udorn and Nakhon Phanom airfields were extremely vulnerable to enemy air attack due to the lack of an air defense alert in that area. He requested four F-4C's for air defense strip alert at Udorn. Although the request was under continuous consideration, it would be February 1966 before F-4C's arrived at the northeastern base. However, those destined for Udorn would not be used in a strictly air defense role. ^{30/}

In early July 1965, the Mainland Southeast Asia Air Defense Region, one of four regions established in PACAF, was divided into two sectors-Southeast Asia East (SEE) and Southeast Asia West (SEW). The

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Southeast Asia West air defense sector in Thailand was a single sector with a Control and Reporting Center (CRC) at Green Hill and a "backup" Control and Reporting Point (CRP) facility at Udorn. The Southeast Asia East air defense sector was sub-divided into Tan Son Nhut and Da Nang sub-sectors. ^{31/}

The closing months of 1965 found the air defense posture in Thailand much the same as it had been at the beginning of the year. High performance jets were available in the country in sufficient numbers to counter an attack on the country. The situation remained static and there was no overt enemy air action in Laos.

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Footnotes

CHAPTER III

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